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HOW CHRISTIAN UNITY CAME TO ALPHA

J. H. ALLEN



CINCINNATI

THE STANDARD PUBLISHING COMPANY







HOW CHRISTIAN UNITY CAME TO ALPHA

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— 1460

A story designed to show how the Christian people of a small town threw off the yoke of denominationalism, and, by combining their strength and energy and means, built up a church that became an honor to Christ and a blessing to the whole town and the community surrounding.

By ^{Joseph} J. H. ^{Allen} ALLEN



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and to "all who love our
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HOW CHRISTIAN UNITY CAME TO ALPHA

CHAPTER I.

GERTRUDE LANE REACHES A DECISION

THE building of the trans-State railroad put new life into the inhabitants of the little village of Alpha. Indeed, from the very day the surveying corps passed through the village and left behind them a row of stakes, marking the company's right-of-way, the people of the village began to dream dreams and see visions of the little village, growing first into a town, and then into a city, with, perhaps, miles of paved streets and electric cars running to and fro. In their imagination they could almost hear the noise and din of the daily traffic: the throbbing of the great engines in the power-house and in the water-plant, the clatter of horses' hoofs and rattle of vehicles, as rival firms sent them here and there to deliver their wares.

But twenty years have passed away since the steel rails were laid through the village and trains began to make their daily visits, and, while the villagers' dream of a great city has not yet been realized, and, perhaps, never will be, yet the little village of twenty years ago has grown into a town with more than a thousand inhabitants, representing from a moral standpoint the two great classes of good and evil. The good, however, have always been largely in the majority,

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as is evidenced by the fact that certain "lewd fellows of the baser sort" had tried upon several occasions to induce the taxpayers to permit them to open a saloon, claiming that such an institution would help the town to grow; but their answer was always an uncompromising "No." "No," they said, "nothing helps a town to grow so much as righteousness, work and money; and our people will be more righteous, do more work and make more money without a saloon than with one." With that fact firmly grounded in their minds and hearts, they had defeated every effort to legalize the sale of intoxicating liquors, and Alpha had long enjoyed the reputation of being a very desirable and pleasant place in which to live. Indeed, but for the friction between the churches, it would have been considered by many a veritable paradise, lacking only the gulf to separate them from those who found pleasure in sin. But that friction was there, and for years the people had endured it, under the delusion that it was a necessary evil. "You see," they said, "we can't all see alike, and hence we must have separate houses in which to worship." And several times in the history of the town the people had responded to the call for money to build churches, until four church-houses stood within the corporate limits of the little town, and four preachers made monthly or semi-monthly visits to teach the people the way of life, according to their respective creeds or church tenets.

The inevitable result of four men preaching conflicting doctrines in the same town was to stir up the party spirit. In fact, so strong had that spirit grown,

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that each preacher had little opportunity of preaching to other than his own members. It is true there were a few who had risen above the party spirit to that extent they were willing to hear all, and it was due largely to the influence of that broad-minded few that a visible and organic union was at last effected between the several churches of the town.

For some time, as opportunity presented itself, they had been pointing out to their brethren the evils of a divided church, and holding up before them the benefits to be derived from an organic union.

It was not, however, until after Gertrude, the nineteen-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lane, had united with the Baptist Church that any definite steps were taken in that direction. Mr. Lane was a steward in the Methodist Church, and no man in the town was held in higher esteem than he, because of his integrity and good moral and religious character. It was, however, with no disrespect to her father that Gertrude had taken this step. She had talked the matter over with him before the step was taken, and in that conversation had called his attention to the fact that, after she had fully decided to become a Christian, the question of baptism confronted her. "You see, father," she said, "I found myself debating the question whether I should be sprinkled or immersed. My natural inclination was to be sprinkled, for, to my mind, that seemed the easier and most convenient way. But when, under the spell of deep conviction, I reread the story of Christ's life on earth, and noted the severe trials, difficulties and hardships which He willingly

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endured in order to perfect the plan of redemption; especially when I considered the trials of the last week of His life—His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, His mock trial before Pilate, His wearing the crown of thorns, His fainting beneath the cross, His agony upon the cross—and realizing that it was for me He endured such suffering, I resolved that the question of ease or convenience should in no way influence my conduct toward Him, but that henceforth the prayer of my heart should be, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me do?’ and, with that prayer upon my lips, I turned to His word for guidance. I examined every passage relating to the subject of baptism, and the result of my investigation was that I became fully convinced that baptism, as taught by Christ and practiced by His apostles, was the immersion in water of a penitent believer in Christ, and I shall never feel that I have obeyed that command of my Lord until, in the language of the apostle Paul, I have been ‘buried with Christ by baptism into death, and raised to walk with him in newness of life.’ ”

Mr. Lane listened attentively while his daughter related her experience, and then replied: “Gertrude, I am indeed pleased to note the candor and earnestness with which you have approached the matter of your soul’s salvation. I would that all might approach it in the same way, and, instead of blindly following the lead of others, allow their own consciences to guide them, having first made a candid investigation of divine truth. That, to my mind, is the right and only safe course to pursue. It’s the course I pursued, and

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the result of my investigation on the subject of baptism was the same as yours; but I am unable to understand why you have decided to unite with the Baptist Church, rather than with the Methodist. Our preachers will immerse whenever the candidate so desires.”

“Not always, father,” interrupted Gertrude; “you forget the case of Eva Jones, or, perhaps, you didn’t know that it was Eva’s desire to be immersed; but it was, and she so informed the preacher. But he argued against it so bitterly that she finally consented to be sprinkled. It was only last evening, however, that she and I were talking on that subject, and she informed me that she had never been satisfied. I remember also, father, hearing you relate your experience along that line, and, if I mistake not, it was not until after three lengthy arguments that your pastor finally consented to immerse you, and then did so by saying, ‘Well, if nothing but immersion will satisfy you, I guess I can do it.’ And, as nothing but immersion will satisfy me, I presume I could induce your pastor to immerse me. At any rate, if there was nothing else involved, I should at least make the attempt. But, to my mind, the question involves another. Paul says: ‘There is one Lord, one faith and one baptism.’ Now, I firmly believe that the ‘one baptism’ of which Paul speaks in his Ephesian letter is the same baptism to which he refers in his Roman letter, and which he declares is a burial and a resurrection, a planting and a coming forth into new life. Now, if the one baptism is a burial, then it is not a sprinkling. If the one is right, the other is wrong. If it’s right to bury people

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by baptism, it's wrong to refuse to bury them, and I fail to see any consistency in one who believes with Paul that baptism is a burial contributing of his means to send out preachers to teach that it isn't a burial. For this reason, I prefer to belong to a church whose preachers not only believe with Paul that baptism is a burial, but who preach it and practice it as well."

After Gertrude had finished, Mr. Lane remained in a thoughtful mood a few moments, and then said: "I had never thought of it in just that light. It does seem somewhat inconsistent for a person who believes as I do—that there is absolutely no authority in the word of God for sprinkling for baptism—to be paying \$50 a year to some man to go out and uphold the practice by inducing all he can to be sprinkled rather than immersed. I'll think the matter over, Gertrude, and see if there isn't a more consistent course I may pursue. In the meantime, regarding your own case, I have only this to say: Let your own conscience, quickened and enlightened by divine truth, be your guide."

The next Sunday was the regular day for preaching at both the Baptist and Methodist Churches, and, though Mr. and Mrs. Lane were very regular in their attendance (seldom missing a service at their own church), yet, knowing their daughter's intention, they decided to accompany her to the Baptist Church. Accordingly, at the appointed hour, the three walked in, and were all seated in the same pew. Their coming attracted the attention of the Baptist members, and was the occasion of much speculation among those who

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never before knew them to leave their own to attend services elsewhere. One old sister (Mrs. Noel) felt that she couldn't wait until the close of the service, and, seizing time by the forelock, she went before it began to express unto them her mingled surprise and joy at seeing them present. "Why! Bro. Lane," she exclaimed, as she seized him by the hand, "it's ointment enough to cure the granulated sore eyes to see you at one of our services; surely the judgment-day must be near at hand."

"Judging from the silver hairs in our heads, sister," replied Mr. Lane, "it can't be very far from us, and I thought it time we Christians were getting a little better acquainted with each other. I fear the angels will think it strange if they have to introduce persons who down here lived all their lives in the same little town."

"You are right, Bro. Lane," replied Mrs. Noel. "There is entirely too much seclusion and selfishness among the Christian people of this town, and I am praying to live to see the time when we can all meet and worship together every Lord's Day."

The announcement of a song was the signal that the service was about to begin, and Mrs. Noel settled down in a seat near the Lanes. After the usual song service and prayer, the preacher read a part of the fourteenth chapter of Luke, and announced that his text would be the twenty-seventh verse: "And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." His selection was a very appropriate one, so far as Gertrude was concerned.

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The text and manner in which it was treated nerved her for the task that lay before her—the task of bearing a cross, the weight of which no one knew but she alone. It was no trivial matter for Gertrude Lane to turn away from the church in which her father and mother had been honored members for so many years; nothing but a conscientious conviction that her Lord was calling her into other paths could induce her to do it. The reading of the account of her Lord's transfiguration had made a lasting impression upon her mind, especially the message that came from God upon that occasion, wherein He declared: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him." This message served to convince her that it was God's will that Christ should be the lawgiver of the Christian dispensation, and she had resolved to recognize him as such. With her, to know the Lord's will was all that was necessary to determine her course of action, and, while she was sensible of the fact that her entire pathway had not yet been made clear, yet she felt that the Lord had discovered to her the next step to be taken, and that step she had resolved to take, trusting she would then be in a position to see further. Accordingly, when the sermon was finished and the congregation arose to sing the invitation hymn, she proceeded to make her way to the front, pausing only long enough to entwine her arms about the necks of her father and mother and impress a kiss upon their cheeks. To say that the people were astonished or surprised is putting it in terms too mild to adequately express it. They were bewildered. Even the

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preacher seemed somewhat nonplused, for, though he knew Gertrude quite well, yet the first question he put to her was: "Isn't this Gertrude Lane?" She assured him that it was, and then informed him that she had come to take the steps necessary to constitute her a Christian. He then announced to the audience that Gertrude Lane, having made up her mind to enter the service of Christ, had come forward in response to the invitation to take the steps necessary to constitute her a Christian; then, turning to Gertrude, he proceeded to question her as follows:

"Gertrude, you no doubt believe the record of Christ's miraculous conception and birth?"

To which she replied, "I do."

"You recognize Him, then, as the divine Son of God and Saviour of men?"

"I do."

"And it is the purpose of your heart to consecrate your life to His service?"

"It is."

"And now, Gertrude, may I ask, do you believe the doctrines as taught and practiced by the Baptist Church to be true and in accord with the teaching of God's word?"

Gertrude remained silent a few moments before attempting to answer this question, at length saying: "I don't know, Bro. Mason, that I can give you a full and satisfactory answer to that question. You speak of the *doctrines* of the Baptist Church, and, really, I don't know that I am well enough acquainted with the doctrines to give you an intelligent answer. In fact,

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I supposed the main difference between the Baptist Church and others was the position they occupied on the subject of baptism. I have made a pretty thorough study of that subject, and can truthfully say that I believe the Baptist doctrine of immersion to be in strict accord with the teaching of God's word; and it was mainly because I so believed that I desired to unite with the Baptist Church. If I had known that such a question would have been asked me, I would have spared us this embarrassment by being prepared to answer; but, under the circumstances, if it be necessary for me to answer this question in order to be received into your fellowship, I see no other alternative than to just defer taking any further action until I have had an opportunity to investigate the matter."

It isn't known just what course the preacher would have taken had he been left to decide the case alone; but that task was not to be imposed upon him, for the moment Gertrude had finished, old Bro. Sims arose and said: "Brethren, I object to making the young lady's inability to answer that question a bar to her admission into the church. If we were to make that question a test of fellowship, I am persuaded we would have to exclude a great many who have, for years, been considered members in good standing and full fellowship, and yet they couldn't, for the life of them, tell you just why they are Baptists from a doctrinal standpoint. Quite certain am I that those five children, ranging in age from nine to twelve years, couldn't, whom we recently admitted. The young lady has confessed her faith in the divinity of

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Christ, acknowledged her willingness to receive Him as her own personal Saviour, and to consecrate her life to His service, and that ought to be enough to admit her to fellowship in this or any other church, and I move you, Bro. Mason, that she be received without further ado as a candidate for baptism, and after that as a member in full fellowship of the Baptist Church of Alpha."

As Bro. Sims was taking his seat, three persons arose simultaneously, in different parts of the house, for the purpose of offering a second to the motion, but before either of them could speak old Bro. Lawson, still sitting in his pew, said: "I second the motion of Bro. Sims."

Whether it was the preacher's intention to further question Gertrude, or to offer any remarks in response to Bro. Sims' speech, is not known, for the three persons who had arisen to offer a second to the motion, finding themselves defeated by Bro. Lawson, exclaimed in rapid succession as they resumed their seats: "Question! Question! Question!" And the motion was immediately put, and carried by a unanimous vote.

At Gertrude's request, the preacher announced that the baptismal service would be held at the church at three o'clock that afternoon, after which, during the singing of that old song,

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee,"

the whole congregation pressed to the front to extend to Gertrude the hand of congratulation and good will.

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After the benediction had been pronounced, and while the people were shaking hands and talking with each other, Gertrude being still detained at the front, Mrs. Noel, who sat during the service in the pew just in front of Mr. and Mrs. Lane, turned to them, and said: "I don't know just how you people feel, but, as for me, my very soul is an arena in which the two opposing emotions of joy and sorrow are struggling for supremacy. It is always a source of joy to me to see young persons like Gertrude voluntarily offer up their lives on the altar of Christian service, but in this case the joy is embittered somewhat by the thought that a denominational wall is to separate parents and child, and thus rob them, to some extent, of the pleasure of each other's fellowship in Christian work and service. I have long felt that these denominational walls were an unnecessary evil, and that feeling has only been intensified by the events of to-day. I'll tell you, Bro. Lane, I have been praying, and shall continue to pray, that God may send to our town, as He did to Jericho of old, some Joshua, who, with the trumpet of divine truth, shall level these denominational walls to the ground, and leave his curse to be visited upon the head of him who shall ever attempt to rebuild them."

"Six months ago, Sister Noel, I would have taken issue with you as to the evils of denominationalism," replied Bro. Lane. "Indeed, until a short time ago, I was inclined to look upon divisions as being necessary. I remember hearing our Bro. Clark preach on that subject some months ago, and he seemed to think divisions were necessary in order to accommodate the diverse

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opinions of the people on the subject of religion, and, without giving the subject any personal thought, I had accepted his conclusions as being correct. But recent developments have caused me to do some thinking along that line myself, and I feel just now more like taking issue with Bro. Clark on the proposition that divisions are right, than with you on the proposition that they are wrong."

"I am indeed pleased, Bro. Lane, to know that your mind is drifting in the right direction. I would that all our people would get to exercising their God-given right of thinking for themselves upon the evils of a divided Christendom. In that case I feel there would be a general drifting together of sentiment, that would result in the overthrow of denominationalism and the establishment of organic union."

By this time Gertrude had joined her father and mother, and, bidding Mrs. Noel good-by, they returned to their home.

CHAPTER II.

DENOMINATIONALISM DIVIDING FAMILIES

A COINCIDENT worthy of notice, and of which Gertrude Lane's union with the Baptist Church was only a part, happened in the town that day. While the Baptists were rejoicing over the addition of one to their flock, the Methodists were rejoicing over two. Emogene Hale, whose father and mother were both staunch members of the Methodist Church, had for some time been the boon companion of Evelyn Drew, whose mother was a member of the Baptist Church, but whose father was not identified with any. Evelyn had accompanied Emogene to the Methodist Church that morning, and during the singing of the invitation hymn Emogene whispered to her, and said: "Let's go up and join." Evelyn hesitated to answer, but instinctively followed when Emogene led the way. They were both taken through the whole formula, including baptism, during the same service.

On her way home from the Baptist Church that morning, Mrs. Drew stopped in to see Mrs. Fowler, another Baptist sister, who had been unable to attend services that morning because of a sick child. Coming into the room where Mrs. Fowler was sitting, and apparently without any thought of the sick child, she

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exclaimed: "Oh, Mrs. Fowler! I just came by to tell you the news. I know you'll think it good news. Gertrude Lane has joined the Baptist Church. Now, isn't that good news? Gertrude is such a sweet girl, and she will be such a help to us."

"In one sense it's good news, but in another it isn't," replied Mrs. Fowler, as she replaced the cover which the sleeping child, startled at the sound of Mrs. Drew's voice, had thrown from it.

"Why, Mrs. Fowler! what do you mean? I thought you would be rejoiced to hear such news as that."

"I am rejoiced, Mrs. Drew, at the thought of Gertrude becoming a Christian; but it is a source of sadness to me to see devout Christian parents like Mr. and Mrs. Lane raising up a daughter, and then being robbed of their fellowship with her in Christian work by belonging to different churches."

"Oh, pshaw! Mrs. Fowler, you're too sentimental. I'm a Baptist to the core, and I rejoice in everything that comes our way. If Mr. and Mrs. Lane want fellowship with their daughter, let them come into the church with her. I don't see what they want to be Methodists for, anyway."

Just as Mrs. Drew began this last statement, Mrs. Fowler's son Walter came into the room, and when she had finished, he said: "Mrs. Drew, you are not aware of the fact, I presume, that you now have a Methodist in your family."

Thinking the boy had reference to Mr. Drew, who was not a member of any church, but frequently called himself a Methodist just to tease his wife, Mrs. Drew

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said: "No, I haven't a Methodist in my family, and if John Drew was to join the Methodist Church, I'd—I'd—well, I'll not say what I'd do, but I'd feel like leaving him."

"It was not Mr. Drew, but Evelyn, I had reference to," explained Walter. "I understand Evelyn united with the Methodist Church this morning."

"What! do you mean to tell me, Walter, that Evelyn Drew has joined the Methodist Church?"

"Yes'm. George Hale told me so."

"Oh, Walter! do you mean it? Is it really true?"

"Yes'm, it's true," exclaimed John, a younger brother, as he came in from the dining-room with a slice of buttered bread in his hand. "I went straight over there from the Baptist Church, and saw the preacher baptize her."

"Are you sure it was Evelyn?"

"Yes'm, I know her."

This added testimony of John convinced her that it was no joke that Walter was practicing upon her, but simply the announcement of an event that had actually occurred; and, as the truth of the situation burst upon her, she burst into a flood of tears, and exclaimed: "Oh, Mrs. Fowler! what shall I do?"

"Why, my dear sister," said Mrs. Fowler, in a tone indicating half pity and half rebuke, "do as thousands of others have done: go through life with a denominational wall between you and your child, or, if you prefer, take the course you awhile ago suggested for Bro. and Sister Lane—quit your church and join hers."

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“Oh, Mrs. Fowler! quit talking your nonsense, and say something to console me. You know I could never join the Methodist Church, and I can’t believe Evelyn was led to do so from any conscientious convictions of right. It was simply a case of one girl leading another.”

“That may be true, Mrs. Drew, and yet it doesn’t justify you in the assertion that Evelyn had no conscientious conviction that she was doing right. Our consciences are creatures of education, and in these days of religious controversy they are being variously educated. Some are being educated to believe that the church is not a very important factor in the matter of our salvation, and that they can be saved without it as well as with it. Others are being educated to believe that one church is as good as another, and it doesn’t matter what church a person belongs to, nor what they believe, if only they are in a way sincere. And, with such ideas as these instilled in their minds, our young people, and many older ones, are merely subjects of social influences, and the church that exerts that influence gets them. Hence the demand for preachers who are good mixers, taffy-slingers, inventors of social devices for captivating and drawing people into the church. Take, for instance, the social given by the church last week in honor of the Hughes family, who recently moved into the town, which was simply a fifteen-dollar bid for them to come into the Baptist Church; while, upon the other hand, there is Sister McCormick, who, with her four small children to care for, has been in very straitened circumstances since

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her husband died last winter. In fact, but for the aid the town gave, she would actually have suffered for the necessities of life. Sister Drew, as I see it, the church is indebted both to the world and to her own individual members. To the world she owes the gospel, while to her individual members she owes the Christ spirit of helpfulness in time of need. Let the church discharge her indebtedness to her individual members by faithfully standing by them and ministering, not alone to their spiritual, but to their temporal needs as well, whenever circumstances render such ministering necessary, and the gospel, faithfully proclaimed, will prove itself to be the only drawing-card necessary to induce the world to enter into its fellowship."

Mrs. Drew sat with her eyes intently fixed on a single figure of the carpet until silence reminded her that Mrs. Fowler was through; then, rising to her feet, she said: "I can not tell you, Sister Fowler, whether I agree with you or not, for, really, I haven't heard a word you have said. My mind has been all around the world, and explored the regions beyond since you began. I'm going home and see what John has to say." And, without any ceremony, she passed out of the house. A breath of fresh air, however, was all that was necessary to restore her mental powers to their normal condition; and before reaching the gate she turned, went back to the door, and said: "I believe I failed to ask you, Sister Fowler, what the trouble was with Mary, and whether or not you consider her dangerously ill."

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“No, Sister Drew, Mary is only suffering from the effects of a slight cold which she has contracted, and I feel sure she will soon be out again. She is decidedly better to-day.”

When Mrs. Drew reached home, she found Evelyn there preparing the table for the noonday meal, while Mr. Drew was out in the kitchen creating a commotion among the pots and pans.

“I hear,” she said to Evelyn, as she began to remove the pins from her hat, “you joined the Methodist Church to-day. Is it true?”

“Yes, ma’am,” replied Evelyn. “Emogene and I both joined.”

The storm that was evidently brewing in Mrs. Drew’s mind, and which, with slight provocation, would, perhaps, have broken forth in its fury with her next utterance, was calmed somewhat by the tone and manner in which Evelyn made her reply; and, instead of harshly upbraiding, she stood eyeing her until she saw a large teardrop roll down her cheeks and fall upon the napkin she was folding, and, without a word of censure, she went to her, and, entwining her arms about her, said: “Well, daughter, mother’s glad to have her child own her Lord and consecrate her life to His service; but you don’t know—well, we’ll not say anything about it now. I doubt not your father is getting hungry. The services were unusually long to-day, and, besides, I stopped in to see little Mary Fowler, who is sick, and, because of it, her mother missed the morning service. Oh, say, Ev! we must have a fire in the cookstove to warm up the coffee.”

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"Father has the fire kindled already," Evelyn replied, as her mother hurried to the kitchen, adjusting her apron as she went.

"Well! has the prodigal returned?" asked Mr. Drew, as his wife came into the kitchen. "I thought perhaps you Baptists had proclaimed this a day of fasting, but what for I didn't know, unless it was because the Methodists had stolen one of your girls."

"Well, I thank you, on that score we break even with them, for we stole one of theirs."

"You did! Pray tell me, wife, what Methodist lamb is it that has strayed into the Baptist fold?"

"Why, it was none other than Gertrude Lane, and her father and mother were both there."

"Good! Let the lambs continue to scatter, and it may be it will drive some of the selfishness out of the old sheep. Perhaps, when their children become members of other churches, they will condescend to go occasionally themselves; and, by going, may learn a valuable lesson, and that is that there are some Christians outside of their respective folds. Really, wife, I'm glad, for your sake, that Evelyn has joined the Methodist Church. It may be now you'll crawl out of your Baptist shell occasionally and go to hear some one else."

"John Drew, that's enough to insult me. You know it isn't selfishness that prevents me going to hear others. It's because I think them wrong."

"Yes, but, wife, it's such an easy matter for a person to hide himself away within the walls of some particular denomination, and then think, merely *think*,

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everybody outside those walls is wrong; but to *know* it is a much more difficult task. To know it requires investigation, and how much time have you spent in candid investigation as to the Scripturalness of the position occupied by your religious neighbors, or even as to the Scripturalness of your own position as a Baptist? Are you sure you would have been a Baptist if your father and mother had been members of some other church?"

This last question seemed to have struck to the quick, and Mrs. Drew responded in rather a petulant tone: "I don't know what I would have been under circumstances like that; but, the fact is, no such circumstances existed in my case, and hence I'm a Baptist."

"Yes, you are a Baptist, wife, in the modern sense and meaning of the term, but not in the Scriptural sense. The Scriptural meaning of the term 'Baptist' is one who baptizes. John was a Baptist simply because he baptized people. For thirty years he was known to the world merely as John; but when he entered upon his ministry and began to baptize people, he was called John the Baptist. Say, wife, how many persons have you ever baptized? If none, then where is your authority for calling yourself a Baptist, seeing the Scriptures recognize none as Baptists save those who have administered the ordinance to others?"

"Well, perhaps you had better go to preaching yourself, and teach the people the way of the Lord more perfectly."

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“Successful teaching, wife, depends upon two things: First, upon the ability of the teacher to teach, and, second, upon the willingness of the pupil to be taught. Granting I had the ability to teach, do you think it likely I would find any very great number of persons in this town who would be willing to be taught, especially if the teaching ran counter to some of their inherited opinions?”

“I can not answer for others, but if you or any one else were to convince me, by Scripture, that some other was better and more in harmony with the revealed will of God than the way I am traveling, I would certainly walk in that way.”

“I’ll remember that statement, wife, and some day we shall see if you are willing to live up to it. But, for the present, I think we had better go and appease our hunger.”

At three o’clock they all went over to the Baptist Church to witness the baptism of Gertrude Lane. When they had entered the vestibule, Evelyn pushed ajar the inner door and peeped into the auditorium. Closing it again, she said: “Why, mamma, it’s just like a funeral occasion! The house is chockful of people.”

Old Bro. Sims, who had just entered the vestibule, overheard her remark, and said: “My dear child, it is a funeral—a death, burial and resurrection all combined. Doesn’t Paul say, ‘We are buried with Christ by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk with him in newness of life’? In this simple ordinance the old man of sin, having

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died, is buried and left entombed, while the new man, having been quickened by the operation of faith, is raised to walk in newness of life." When he had finished, he led the way into the auditorium, and found seats for the Drews, and was scarcely seated in his own pew when the preacher arose and invited the congregation all to join in singing that old hymn:

"Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee;
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me."

When the song was finished, Bro. Sims was called upon to lead in prayer, after which Bro. Mason read, without comment, several passages of Scripture bearing upon the subject of baptism, including the passage from Romans 6 which Bro. Sims had quoted to Evelyn at the door. Having finished the reading, he walked to the head of the baptistery, and, as the two began their descent into the pool, the choir began to sing softly,

"My life, my love, I give to Thee,
Thou Lamb of God, who died for me;"

finishing the verse just as the preacher raised his hand, and said: "Gertrude, by the authority of Jesus Christ and upon a voluntary confession of your faith in Him, I baptize you 'into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'" At that moment every eye was fixed upon Gertrude. They watched her as, with an expression of extreme resignation upon her face, she suffered herself to be lowered into the watery grave, and when she came forth again, gasping for breath, a new-born babe in the kingdom of Christ, it required only the soft tones of the choir singing

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“I’ll live for Him, who died for me,
How happy then my life shall be,”

to enable Evelyn Drew to see the appropriateness of immersion as a means of inducting a penitent believer into the kingdom of Christ; and when on their way home her mother said to her, “Well, daughter, what did you think of the service?” Evelyn replied: “I thought it very nice indeed, mother. Really, I never knew there was such a passage in the Bible as that Bro. Sims quoted to me in the vestibule, but I suppose there is, as Bro. Mason read the same passage.”

“Yes, daughter, it’s there,” replied Mr. Drew; “and its presence upon the pages of sacred history will ever be a rebuke to those who, for convenience’ sake, fail in their baptism to represent to the world the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.”

“It has already served as a rebuke to me, father,” said Evelyn; “but if I am enabled to carry out the resolution I have formed to-day, I trust all will turn out well in the end.”

“May I ask, daughter, what the resolution is you have formed?”

“It’s simply this: I have resolved to study my Bible, and to make it my rule of faith and practice.”

“A good resolution, Ev., and when the Christian people of this town all agree to do likewise, I’ll be ready to join hands with them.”

“I am sorry, father, I can not return your compliment by pronouncing your statement ‘good.’ I see no good reason why you should wait until all agree to do right before you make the start yourself. If we are to

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be judged as individuals, we ought to act as individuals."

"I stand reproved, Ev. I never intended to try to defend the logic of that statement when I made it. We people of the world must always say something in justification of our conduct, whether there be any logic in it or not. But, logic or no logic, one thing is true: there are thousands of people in the world who are waiting for the Christian people to get together in some way, and I fear they will never join them until they do."

By this time they had reached home, and a few minutes later Evelyn was seated at a window reading her Bible, apparently intent on carrying out her resolution.

CHAPTER III.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

WHEN the time for the evening service drew near, Mr. Lane said to Gertrude: "Daughter, we have already come in sight of one of the difficulties that lie in the way of a divided Christendom, and that is the difficulty of attending evening services when members of the same family belong to different churches. Your mother and I would like to attend the service at our church this evening, as we missed the morning service, but if you desire—"

"Very well, father," interrupted Gertrude, "you and mother may have your wish in that matter, for I have decided to go to the Methodist Church this evening myself. It was very generous in you and mother to forego the pleasure of your morning service to accompany me, and I see no reason why the daughter should be less generous than her parents."

"Very well, then, Gertrude. I had started to say, when you interrupted me, that if you desired to go to the Baptist Church, and had no one else to accompany you home, you could just stop in at Bro. Sims' after the service, and I would come for you. But, as you have decided to go with us, there will be no need of such an arrangement."

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"None to-night, father; I'll reserve your offer for some future date."

At the appointed hour, the Lanes all went over to the Methodist Church, and were somewhat surprised, as they walked into their pew, to find Mr. and Mrs. Drew and Evelyn all seated in the pew next ahead.

"Why, Mrs. Drew!" exclaimed Mrs. Lane. "I'm surprised to find you here."

"You are no more surprised than I at being here. If I even dreamed of such a thing last night, it was like Nebuchadnezzar's dream—it left me before I awoke."

"Parents will follow their children into paths they wouldn't think of traveling alone," said Mr. Drew. "You see, Mrs. Lane, these Methodists stole her girl this morning, and that accounts for her being here this evening; and, by the way, I understand you and Mr. Lane were over at the Baptist Church this morning. Now, I am inclined to think this mingling of Christian people a good thing. There are good people in all these churches—people who love God, and who are trying to serve Him in an acceptable way. At least, they are trying to serve Him according to the way they have been taught; and, if their teaching has been wrong, they may discover it by getting out and hearing others. I don't know, of course, just how a Christian feels, but it seems to me if I were one, the chief desire of my heart would be to know the truth. I should want to know that the pathway I was walking in was the one ordained of God. And when it came to these disputed questions, it seems to me I could

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not feel that my position was infallibly safe until I had compared it with the position of those in opposition."

"That would be rather a laborious task, Mr. Drew," replied Gertrude. "There are so many conflicting theories that one would grow tired of the process of comparison before they were through, and even then might fail to find the position that was infallibly right and safe. It seems to me a better way would be to compare your own position on such questions with the position occupied by the apostles and early Christians, and if there is harmony between your position and theirs, then you may rest assured you are in the safe way; if not, you had better abandon your position and accept theirs, for the position which they occupied is the position pointed out to them by the Divine Spirit, and can not be wrong."

"I think Gertrude's the better plan, father," said Evelyn.

"Very well, then, with two against me, I'll yield the point and close the argument."

"It's time you were closing, for there comes the preacher down the aisle," remarked Mrs. Drew.

When the minister had reached the platform, and spoken a few words to the organist, he asked the congregation to stand and all join in singing "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." That song was followed by a prayer, another song and a Scripture reading taken from the fifteenth chapter of John. The text was a part of the fifth verse, wherein Christ declared, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." The first part

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of his sermon was exceptionally good. In it Christ was held up before the people as the great spiritual life-giver, whom God sent down here into the regions of spiritual death for the purpose of transforming the spiritually dead, and then nourishing them day by day, as the vine the branches, by imparting unto them the life principles which the Father had given unto Him.

But, in discussing the latter part of the text, he made the blunder common to those who are wont to make an apology for denominationalism, by making the term "branches" apply to denominations, rather than to individual disciples.

The result of the sermon, with those who had never given the subject of denominationalism any serious thought, was to further intrench them within the limits of their own narrow circle. But the result with Mr. Lane was different. It tuned him for an argument with the preacher, and as soon as the benediction was pronounced, he went to him and invited him to go home with him. The invitation was accepted. However, it was some time after they had reached home before Mr. Lane found a favorable opportunity for opening up the subject. He wanted Gertrude present, but she had been accompanied home by a young man who felt inclined to tarry awhile, so that it was a full half-hour before Gertrude was permitted to leave the parlor and come into the sitting-room; but when she did, he said: "Gertrude, I wish you would get the Bible, please; I want Bro. Clark to read some for us."

"Anything special you want me to read, Bro. Lane?" he asked, as Gertrude handed him the Book.

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"Yes, I would like you to read the fifteenth chapter of John."

"Why, that's the chapter I read this evening at the church."

"I know it is, and that is the reason I want you to read it again. I think you failed to read it right this evening, or, if you did, your sermon failed to agree with your text."

"Shall I read the whole chapter?"

"No, just read the first ten or twelve verses."

He read as requested.

"Now, Bro. Clark, who is it talking in that chapter?"

"It is Christ."

"To whom is He talking?"

"His disciples."

"What does He say of Himself?"

"He says, 'I am the vine.'"

"What does He say of the disciples?"

"He says, 'Ye are the branches.'"

"If, then, the disciples are the branches, where did you get your authority for saying the different religious denominations were the branches?"

"Well, the two expressions are equivalent. The denominations are composed of disciples."

"Were there any denominations when Christ was speaking these words to His disciples?"

"No; it was centuries after that the disciples became divided up into separate denominations."

"If, then, there were no denominations in existence at that time, how do you account for His using the

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word 'are' in the text you used to-night? He says, 'Ye *are* the branches.' Whoever he meant to be the branches were the branches at that time; and, as there were no denominations in existence, but only individual disciples, it seems to me, Bro. Clark, that we are forced to the conclusion that it was His individual disciples whom He had in mind when He said, 'Ye are the branches,' and not denominations, which you admit had no existence at that time."

"Well, I do not think this a matter of consequence sufficient to justify us quibbling over it," said the preacher, as he closed the Book and laid it on the table.

"To my mind, it is a question of considerable consequence, Bro. Clark. If, as you declared this evening, this text means that these denominations are the branches of the true vine, then we have divine authority for them, and those persons who are pleading for organic union are doing wrong, in that they are pleading for the destruction of these branches by the merging of all denominations into one great body. But, upon the other hand, if, when Christ uttered the words of this text, He had no reference to denominations, but only to individual disciples, then the text doesn't furnish any authority for denominations, but leaves them to stand or fall on their own merits or demerits."

"It is my opinion, Bro. Lane, that it will be a long time before they fall or cease to be."

"It may be. The walls of Jericho would have been long in falling had the priests, instead of doing what God commanded them to do, called the people

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together and told them those walls were there by divine appointment, and should remain, and then done all within their power to uphold them. And so, I presume, it will be a long time before these denominational walls shall fall if the preachers, instead of preaching union, as God has commanded them to do, continue to go about, as many of them are, instilling in the minds of the people the idea that these walls are here by divine appointment, and should be let alone. But, while such conduct on the part of many of our preachers will necessarily retard the cause of union, yet I cannot believe that it will effectually prevent it, for I discover a growing sentiment among the laity in favor of it. The people are growing tired of the burdens that denominationalism has imposed upon them, not only of the financial burden, occasioned by the building of several times as many church-houses and supporting several times as many preachers as are needed in a given town or community, but of the even more grievous burden of having their families divided, and I predict a general uprising of the laity in the not far distant future for the correction of these evils."

"It will be a grand spectacle, don't you think, Bro. Lane, to see the laity teaching the clergy theology?" retorted Bro. Clark, in a tone of voice that indicated derision.

"Well, it may be a somewhat spectacular event, Bro. Clark, but not an unprecedented one, for the New Testament furnishes us an example of the laity, in the persons of Aquila and Priscilla, teaching the eloquent Apollos the 'way of the Lord more perfectly,' and such

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things seem to be in line with God's plans, for we read that 'God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty,' and who can tell but that the laity, who, in their weakness, have suffered themselves to be 'led about by every wind of doctrine,' may yet become, under the directing hand of God, the mighty power that shall break the shackles of denominationalism and usher in that era of unity and peace that shall make the 'church of the living God,' in the estimation of the world, the grandest institution ever inaugurated?"

"Well, in view of the approaching conflict, I move you, Bro. Lane, that we all retire."

"Very well, Bro. Clark, but first lead us in a word of prayer."

As they all knelt, Bro. Clark offered a very earnest prayer, but made no reference to the subject they had been discussing.

The next day the two preachers returned to their homes, leaving the people to think on and discuss the events that had transpired since their coming.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW PREACHER

PERHAPS the busiest person in the town for the next several weeks was Gertrude Lane. In addition to the household duties that devolved upon her, she had undertaken a systematic study of the Bible. Now that she was a member of the church, she felt she wanted to be able to give to those who asked a "reason for the hope that was within her." She had felt chagrined at her inability to answer the question that was put to her by the preacher, with reference to the doctrines of the Baptist Church, and the first thing she did on Monday morning, after the household duties had been attended to, was to go over to Bro. Sims.

"I just came over, Bro. Sims," she said, after thanking him for a chair that was offered her, "to ask if you had a book or anything that would enable me to know what the doctrines are as taught and practiced by the Baptist Church. I never felt so cheap in my life as I did when Bro. Mason asked me that question and I couldn't answer it."

"Don't allow that to worry you, sister, for there are thousands in the church who couldn't give an intelligent answer to that question. In fact, I don't

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think preachers have any right to ask such a question. It is a temptation to persons to testify falsely, rather than place themselves in the embarrassing position you were in yesterday. For instance, upon one occasion a young lady united with our church, whom I had heard express herself as opposed to the Baptist doctrine and practice of 'close or restricted communion;' yet when the preacher asked if she believed the doctrines taught and practiced by the Baptist Church were right and in accord with the Bible, she answered 'Yes.' I met her later and asked if she had changed her mind regarding communion.

" 'No,' she said, 'I have not changed my mind in regard to that matter one whit. I still think it not right.'

" 'Then,' said I, 'why did you answer "Yes" when asked concerning the doctrines and practice of the church?'

" 'Well, what was I to do?' she replied. 'Had I answered "No," it would have created a scene, and probably resulted in them rejecting me.'

"I assured her that, in that case, I would have been a party to the scene. Had he attempted to reject her for not believing in the practice of 'close communion,' I should have apprised him of the fact that I did not believe in it myself, and that it was my settled conviction that not one-half of the membership of the congregation believed in it; for I have heard too many of them express themselves on the subject, and he would have found it rather an inconsistent procedure to have rejected her, while retaining them."

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“May I ask, Bro. Sims, what is meant by ‘close or restricted communion’?” Gertrude asked.

“It means a communion to be participated in only by the members of that particular congregation.”

“Does that mean that I will not be permitted to partake of the communion with my father and mother, nor they with me?” she asked, with apparent surprise; “and, if so, why do they have such a ruling?”

“Yes, that is what it means, and one of the reasons for the practice, as expressed by Bro. Mason in a recent sermon, was to prevent us communing with the unconverted and with persons not properly baptized. I presume he had forgotten the case of John Spaulding, when he made that statement about communing with the unconverted. As you know, John’s reputation was not at all good before he united with the church, and for that reason he was rejected by Zilpah Page when he sought her hand in marriage. To accomplish his end, he feigned conversion and united with the church. I remember the night he went to the altar, and, with tear-stained face, asked for prayer in his behalf. I remember also how, after the prayer, he declared he had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken peace and pardon to his troubled soul, Bro. Mason declaring it a case of genuine conversion. You remember as well as I how he was then made a teacher in the Bible school, and for two years served in that capacity, until he had won the confidence of all, including Zilpah herself, who finally consented and married him, only to be left a grass-widow a few weeks later, when he suddenly disappeared, taking with him a neat sum of money which

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her father had given them with which to buy a home, and leaving behind a note, in which he said: 'Having accomplished my purpose, I bid you a long farewell.' Since then, Sister Gertrude, I have had little confidence in restricted communion preventing us communing with the unconverted. Four times during those two years we sat at the communion table with John Spaulding, than whose, perhaps, a blacker heart never beat in this town. 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup,' is the apostolic injunction, and we can not do better than to follow it. You asked for a book on Baptist doctrine; I haven't any. My advice to you is, study your Bible and do as it directs.'

"Very well, Bro. Sims; I had purposed doing that, anyway, but I feel more determined since hearing you talk, and I thank you very much for this interview," Gertrude said as she arose to go.

The next Sunday was the regular day for preaching at the Presbyterian and Brethren Churches (the latter commonly known as "Dunkards"), and, in addition, Bro. Birch, the Christian preacher, was to preach at the Methodist Church.

Bro. Birch was rather a new man in the town. His first visit to the town was made some six months before, at the solicitation of several of the citizens, who were members of the Christian Church, and, after preaching several nights, he organized the twenty or more members whom he found there into a local congregation, and had since been making monthly visits to the town to preach to them, and as many others as would come

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to hear him. But, although he was a man of strong pulpit ability, yet he experienced great difficulty in getting a respectable hearing. Of course, his own members went to hear him, and also a goodly number of those who were not members of any church, but only a few of the members of other churches ever went. In fact, there seemed to be a general understanding among them not to go. The one thing upon which the four churches seemed agreed was that they would let the "Campbellite" preacher, as they called him, alone. And they did let him alone so far as staying away from the services was concerned, but in the matter of using their tongues to prejudice others against him, they didn't let him alone, and many false impressions concerning him and his teaching had thus been generated in the minds of the people.

"I don't see what that fellow wanted to come here and organize another church for," said a Baptist brother to a crowd of men as the preacher passed where they were sitting just the day before he was to preach. "We had enough churches here already."

"That's just what we people of the world thought when you Baptists organized six years ago, Mr. Potter," responded Mr. Drew; "there were three churches here then, and we thought them quite a sufficiency, in numbers at least, for such a town as this."

"Perhaps it was a sufficiency in numbers, but not in kind."

"How many churches of the right kind would a town like this require?"

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"I presume one would be sufficient, if it was the right kind."

"Then, I presume, in the estimation of you Baptists, neither of the three that were here before were of the right kind, else you wouldn't have organized yours."

"Yes, I presume that's about the way we looked at it."

"Well, perhaps Mr. Birch and his members looked at it in about the same way, and why censure him for doing what you have done yourself?"

"Oh, well, there was more reason in us organizing a Baptist church than in him organizing a Campbellite church."

Mr. Watson, the merchant, took up the argument, and said: "You certainly have a rare power of discrimination, Mr. Potter, if you can see more reason for organizing a 'Baptist' church than for organizing a 'Campbellite' church. I thought the only authority men had for organizing churches at all came from God, and I have read His word from Genesis to Revelation, and I found just as much authority for organizing a 'Campbellite' church as I did for organizing a 'Baptist' church, and I found none for either. The terms 'Baptist church' and 'Campbellite church' are not found anywhere in the revealed word of God. And if Mr. Birch organized a 'Campbellite' church in this town, he acted with as little authority from God as you did when you organized the Baptist Church; but I think you are mistaken about his organizing a 'Campbellite' church."

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"That's the kind they say he organized anyway."

"I presume the *they* of whom you speak has reference to 'Madam Rumor' and her crowd; if so, judging from the silver hairs in your temples, Mr. Potter, I should think you old enough to have learned that what *they* say can not be relied on as being true. *They* said Christ was Beelzebub, but that didn't make it so. I think a better plan would be to go and hear the man yourself; not once, but until you thoroughly understood his plea, and then offer your criticisms, if you have any to offer. Solomon says: 'He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.' It is my candid opinion, Mr. Potter, that the plea that man is making for organic Christian union, if accepted, would mean more for the peace, prosperity and happiness of this town than anything that could happen to it."

"If you think his plea such a grand thing, why don't you accept it yourself?"

"It is the one thing I expect to do, Mr. Potter, and then use whatever influence I may have to get others to accept it."

"You may accept it if you like, but I am not ready to become a '*Campbellite*' myself."

"Nor am I. To become a *Christian* will be quite enough for me."

"If you join that church, you will be a '*Campbellite*,' however much you repudiate the name."

"By the way, men, there goes the preacher now. I'm going to call him in and turn him loose on Mr.

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Potter," exclaimed Mr. Drew, as he arose and hastened toward the door.

"I just wanted you to meet these men, and settle a dispute that has arisen," said Mr. Drew to the preacher, as he approached the men, supplementing his remark by introducing him to those whom he had never before met.

"Now, Mr. Drew, I have finished the first part of my mission, and am ready to undertake the next," said the preacher, as he finished shaking hands with the men.

"So you are ready for the question, are you?"

"Yes, but you are aware, I presume, that it's oft-times easier to ask questions than to answer them, and I trust your question will not be a very difficult one."

"It does seem rather difficult for those who attempt to answer to make some people understand it. It was asserted here awhile ago that if a person should join your church, that act would constitute him a 'Campbellite,' and the question is, Is the assertion true or no?"

"Before I answer the question I would like to offer a correction to the wording of the assertion by striking out the words 'your church' and substituting therefor the words 'the church you represent,' for I do not claim to have a church of my own. If I had, and one should see fit to join it, I suppose he could justly be called a 'Birchite,' but the church I represent doesn't belong to me, neither did it belong to Alexander Campbell, but to Christ, who died to bring it into existence;

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therefore, when one meets the conditions and becomes a member of His church, he is a Christian, and not a Campbellite."

Mr. Potter, having recovered somewhat from the shock of meeting the preacher, said: "I am still unable to see, Bro. Birch, why you people are not Campbellites, just as truly as the followers of Martin Luther are Lutherans, or the followers of John Calvin are Calvinists."

"I haven't the time just now to explain the matter to you, Bro. Potter, but if you will come to the Methodist Church to-morrow morning, I promise you I will do my best to make the matter clear."

CHAPTER V.

BACK TO CHRIST AND HIS WORD

WHETHER it was due to the word that had gone out that Bro. Birch would explain that he and his people were not Campbellites, or whether it just happened so, we can not tell, but quite a large crowd assembled at the Methodist Church the day following to hear him preach. Besides his own members and a goodly number of non-professors, there were large delegations from the Baptist and Methodist Churches, and, although it was the regular day for services at the Presbyterian and Brethren Churches, yet a few of the members of each of these churches were among those who that day worshiped at the Methodist Church.

After the usual preliminaries, the preacher announced that, in accord with a promise which he had made to a certain individual, he would speak to them on the subject, "Why I Am Not a Campbellite." "But, first of all, I want to read you a passage of Scripture found in the second chapter of Revelation, and which reads as follows: 'So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which thing I hate' (Rev. 2:15).

"I have not read this passage for the purpose of using it as a text, but merely to get a certain thought

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before your minds. From this passage we learn that, at the time when Christ visited John on the Isle of Patmos, there was a class of people on earth known as 'Nicolaitans,' and who were recognized as such by Christ Himself. But I raise the question: Why were those men called 'Nicolaitans'? In tracing their history, we find that years before there was a certain man named Nicholas, who was the author of a certain system of doctrine; just what that doctrine was doesn't concern us, so far as our present work is concerned. Sufficient to say that all who accepted his system of doctrine were called Nicolaitans, and the thought I wish to impress upon your minds is that those people were 'Nicolaitans' by virtue of their having accepted the doctrine of Nicolas. If Nicolas had never formulated any system of doctrine, there never would have been any 'Nicolaitans.'

"On the afternoon of yesterday the gentleman to whom I have already referred said to me: 'I am unable to see why you people are not Campbellites, just as truly as the followers of Martin Luther are Lutherans, or the followers of John Calvin are Calvinists.'

"Now, I hope to be able to prove to your entire satisfaction, my friends, that there is a marked difference in the relationship which Martin Luther and John Calvin sustained to their followers, and the relationship which Alexander Campbell sustained to those associated with him in the work of restoring to the world apostolic Christianity.

"In the first place, as some one has said, Martin Luther is accredited with the work of organizing a

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church, even to the extent of drafting for it a constitution. The Augsburg Confession is nothing more nor less than the constitution of the Lutheran Church, even as the Westminster Confession is the constitution of the Presbyterian Church. But what is a 'Confession of Faith'? Webster says it is 'a creed to be assented to, or signed, as a preliminary to admission into a church.' The Augsburg Confession, then, containing Luther's doctrines, stands at the very entrance of the Lutheran Church, and says to every one seeking fellowship therein: 'I contain a certain system of doctrine, to which you must assent in order to your admission.' But when we take into consideration the fact that the system of doctrine contained in the Augsburg Confession is simply Luther's deductions from the Scriptures, we can see some consistency in calling those who accept it 'Lutherans.' Indeed, there is just as much consistency in calling them Lutherans as there was in calling those who accepted the doctrines of Nicolas 'Nicolaitans.' They were Nicolaitans for the simple reason that they had accepted the system of doctrine formulated by Nicolas. These are Lutherans for the reason that they have accepted the system of doctrine formulated by Luther.

"But some one will ask perhaps: 'Wouldn't it be just as consistent to call those who accept the doctrines of Campbell "Campbellites" as to call those who accept the doctrines of Luther "Lutherans," or those who accept the doctrines of Nicolas "Nicolaitans"?"

"Certainly it would be. If Alexander Campbell had gone to work and formulated a system of doctrine

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for men to assent to in order to their admission into some church which he had organized, it would be just as consistent to call those who accepted his system of doctrine 'Campbellites' as to call those 'Nicolaitans' who accepted the doctrines of Nicolas, or to call those 'Lutherans' who accept the Augsburg Confession. But the fact is, Mr. Campbell never formulated any system of doctrine for any one to assent to as a preliminary to entering into some church which he had organized. Indeed. Mr. Campbell never organized any church. The only thing he did in the way of organization was to organize into local congregations those who already belonged to the church of Christ.

"But some one may ask: 'If Mr. Campbell never organized a church, nor formulated any system of doctrine, then, what did he do?'

"He simply pointed a divided Christendom back to the apostolic church, and asked them to lay aside all human creeds and confessions of faith that had been formulated by men, and accept in their stead that system of doctrine formulated by Christ and His inspired apostles. Hence it is more consistent to call us 'Christians' than 'Campbellites,' since it is from Christ, and not from Campbell, that we get our doctrine.

"I trust I have made this point clear. I am exceedingly anxious, my friends, that you understand the real nature of the work Mr. Campbell attempted to do, for I am persuaded that when you fully understand it, it will appeal to you favorably, unless, perchance, you have permitted your minds to become filled with prejudice to that extent you have become blinded to the

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truth. I am slow to believe, however, that this latter statement can be true. Indeed, I have come to believe that a great deal of that we call prejudice in humanity is merely a distorted condition of the mind, brought about by our failure to understand certain things.

“I remember talking with a man upon one occasion who, at first, impressed me as being extremely prejudiced against Mr. Campbell; but I hadn’t talked with him long when I discovered he didn’t understand the nature of the work which Mr. Campbell had attempted to do. He had gotten the idea into his head that Mr. Campbell had organized a church, and that he had not only organized a church, but had laid down to the world the terms of admission into it, and that the main feature in those terms was baptism, and hence he said: ‘My objection to the Campbellite church is, it makes too much of baptism.’ I said to him: ‘My friend, I shall not attempt to argue that question with you, for my knowledge of the Campbellite church isn’t sufficient to justify me saying how much or how little it makes of baptism, or of anything else. In fact, I have no knowledge of any such church ever having been organized.’ ‘Why,’ said he, ‘I refer to the church organized by Alexander Campbell in the beginning of the nineteenth century.’ I told him I thought he was mistaken about Mr. Campbell organizing a church, and, if he would permit, I would explain to him as best I could the real nature of the work which he attempted to do, and then he could judge for himself whether he organized a church or not. I began by calling his attention to the fact that nearly nine-

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teen hundred years ago Christ, through the medium of his apostles, organized a church in the city of Jerusalem, and that that church had no human, or man-made, creed for the government of the conduct of its members; but they were governed by the teachings of the inspired apostles, as those teachings were first given them orally and afterwards committed to writing, as we have them in the New Testament to-day. Under the guidance of the apostles' teaching, as recorded in the New Testament Scriptures, the church lived and prospered during the first three centuries as it has never prospered since. But the beginning of the fourth century was the critical period in the church's history. It was then that an event occurred that, to my mind, marked the beginning of the great apostasy. Arius, a deacon in the church at Alexandria, didn't believe that Christ and God were the same individuality—one inseparable unit. The bishops, regardless of the fact that the Scriptures themselves furnish room for an honest difference of opinion, had him excommunicated. Eusebius, the historian, espoused the cause of Arius, and sought to have him reinstated. The controversy grew warm between Arius and the bishops, and Constantine, the Emperor, convoked the Council of Nice, for the purpose of settling the dispute, and they settled it by writing out the Nicene Creed, in which they attempted to define for Arius and every one else the relationship existing between Christ and God.

“My object in referring to this matter is not to defend Arius, nor to endorse his opinion of the relationship of Christ and God, but to question the right

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of those bishops to interpose, through the medium of that creed, their opinions as a test of fellowship in the church of Jesus Christ. Where, since that memorable day when God finished his revelation to man, and left his curse to be visited upon him who should attempt to add thereto or take therefrom, has God ever delegated to any man, or set of men, the privilege of writing down their opinions and holding them up before others for endorsement in order to membership in the church of Christ?

“It was through the operation of that selfsame spirit that bishops finally grew into priests and prelates, and took the right of private judgment away from the laity by taking the Bible out of their hands and retaining it in their own, thus constituting themselves the sole interpreters of the Word; so that the people were taught to believe whatever the priests told them to believe and do whatever the priests told them to do.

“Such was the condition of the religious world when Martin Luther appeared upon the stage. Luther was educated for a Catholic priest, but became filled with holy indignation when he saw how the priesthood had denied the people the right of reading their own Bibles. In Luther’s opinion that was wrong, and, with mighty power and dauntless courage, he wrenched the Bible out of the hands of the priests and gave it back to the people. Had Luther only stopped there, his work would have been a grand success, and there never would have been any necessity for the work which Alexander Campbell and others were called upon to do

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in order to perfect the work which he had so nobly begun. But Luther didn't stop there, and, failing to do so, he committed the grave mistake of his life. He knew it wasn't right that the people should be denied the right of private judgment, but he failed to see what it was that had deprived them of that right. Had he only glanced back at church history, perhaps he might have discovered in that council at Nice the beginning of the rent between the clergy and the laity, which rent grew wider and wider with each succeeding generation, until the people were deprived altogether of their God-given right of private judgment. But, failing to see that point, Luther went to work and made the same mistake which the bishops before him had made, by getting his men together at Augsburg and writing the Augsburg Creed, or Confession of Faith, and making it a test of fellowship in the church which he had organized. But that creed was nothing more nor less than Luther's own deductions from the Scriptures, even as the Nicene Creed was the bishop's deductions, and it cut out from fellowship in Luther's church all who couldn't subscribe to his creed.

"In the process of time John Calvin appeared upon the stage, and, finding himself unable to endorse all of Luther's deductions as contained in the Augsburg Confession, he began to preach independently, and called upon all who believed as he did to come to him, and they came, and later they wrote out the 'Westminster Confession of Faith' as a test of fellowship in the church which he had organized. But, if Calvin couldn't subscribe to Luther's deductions as set forth in the

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Augsburg Confession, it were useless for him, or his followers, to think that future generations would all subscribe to his deductions as set forth in the Westminster Confession. If they even thought so, they were greatly mistaken, for later there arose men who, finding themselves unable to subscribe either to Luther's or to Calvin's deductions, went to work and organized other churches and formulated other creeds to fit their ideas, until there were scores of churches, each fenced off from the other by a creed which men had invented.

"Such was the condition of the religious world when Thomas and Alexander Campbell came from Ireland to America. They were both raised in the Presbyterian faith. But upon their arrival in America, they were able to see the evils of a divided Christendom as they had never seen it before. Here they found the church all divided up into various denominations, and even the denominations divided and subdivided into more than a dozen different parties, each manifesting toward the other a spirit of rabid intolerance, to such an extent that, even among the Presbyterians, persons belonging to one party were denied the privilege of communing with those of another.

" 'This is all wrong,' declared the Campbells. 'In the New Testament the church of Christ is a unit—one "body," one "household of faith," one "spiritual temple"—but here we find it all cut up into rival parties warring against each other, and wasting their time, energy and means in fratricidal strife, while the major part of the world is still hungering and thirsting for the bread and water of life. It's nothing in the

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world but these human creeds, which men have invented and made tests of fellowship, that has caused all the trouble. Let us throw them all aside, go back and take our stand upon the Bible, and it alone, as our rule of faith and practice. Where it speaks, let us speak; where it is silent, let us be silent. That is, whatever it plainly commands men to do, let us insist that men shall do those things; but where its teaching isn't clear, let each have his individual opinion, but hold it as his own private property, and don't try to thrust it upon his neighbor.'

"And suiting their actions to their words, they threw aside the old Presbyterian creed which they had been wearing, and took up the Bible, with the avowed purpose of teaching only what the inspired apostles taught as being necessary for the salvation of men.

"And thus we find that, instead of Alexander Campbell organizing the church and formulating a system of doctrine of his own for the government of the conduct of the members, he simply stands upon the pages of history as a signboard, pointing a divided Christendom back to the apostolic church, and admonishing them, for the sake of unity, to lay aside all human creeds and systems of doctrine, and accept in their stead the system of doctrine formulated by Christ and His inspired apostles.

"As a people, then, we believe and teach faith in Christ as the foundation of the sinner's hope. But why do we so believe and teach? Think you, my friends, that it is because Alexander Campbell believed and

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taught it? I tell you nay. We believe it because the New Testament Scriptures, which we have taken as our guide-book, teach it. We believe and teach that God requires every believing sinner to repent in order to his salvation; not because Mr. Campbell taught it, but because Christ and His apostles taught it. We believe that the immersion, or burial in water, of a penitent believer in Christ is Christian baptism; not because Mr. Campbell taught it, but because Paul taught it when he said: 'Therefore we are buried with Christ by baptism.' We believe God requires every penitent, baptized believer to live a pious, sober and godly life, growing in grace and knowledge of Christ daily; not because Mr. Campbell taught it, but because the New Testament Scriptures, written by the inspired apostles, teach it. We believe that divisions among the people of God are wrong and a hindrance to the progress of Christ's kingdom in the work of evangelizing the world; not because Mr. Campbell taught it, but because Paul taught the former in his rebuke to the Corinthians, and Christ taught the latter in His prayer for the unity of His followers. We believe the wearing of names, other than the all-significant name which God has given us to wear in honor of His Son, is a fruitful source of divisions, and should be discontinued; not because Mr. Campbell taught it, but because the inspired apostle Paul has taught it.

"Thus you see, instead of getting our doctrine from Mr. Campbell, we have gone back of him, and gotten it from Christ and His inspired apostles; hence it is more appropriate to call us 'Christians' than 'Camp-

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bellites,' since it is from Christ, and not from Campbell, we have obtained our doctrine.

"Now, I hope I have made this plain enough to enable every one to understand the real nature of the work which Alexander Campbell attempted to do. Think of him, my friends, not as the founder of the church, but merely as a sign-board pointing a divided Christendom back to the apostolic church. Think of him, not as attempting to bind upon his fellow-men some system of doctrine which he had formulated, but as a man pleading with his fellow-men, for the sake of unity and peace, to lay aside all man-made systems and accept in their stead the system of doctrine that was formulated by Christ and His inspired apostles.

"And now, in conclusion, if there is a man or woman here this morning who believes with all his or her heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of men, will you not take the steps necessary to give you a part in this atoning blood and grace, first, by confessing Him before men, and then, with truly penitent heart, following Him in the ordinance of Christian baptism, coming forth from the watery grave to walk with Him in newness of life?"

Hardly had the audience begun to sing the invitation song when Mr. Watson, the merchant, stepped into the aisle, and made his way to the front. His going caused an atmosphere of solemnity to pervade the building, and the whole audience seemed wrapped in serious thought. Mr. Drew, who was standing between his wife and daughter and directly in front of Mr. Lane, seemed especially touched; his great frame was

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trembling with emotion, and once, when he turned his face in the direction of his wife, Mr. Lane saw a large teardrop trickling down his cheek, and, leaning forward, he said in an undertone: "John, 'quench not the Spirit.' "

"Thank you, Bro. Lane, I'll not," he said, as he beckoned his wife to stand aside and let him pass out into the aisle.

As John Drew walked down the aisle, the eyes of the whole congregation were fixed upon him, but scarcely had he taken a seat beside Mr. Watson when the attention of the audience was attracted to another man making his way to the front, followed by his wife, a grown son and daughter. It was the Hughes family, who had recently moved into the town.

When the invitation song was finished and the audience seated, the preacher asked each of those who had come to the front the question: "Do you believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of men?" To which question they each responded, "I do." And, turning to the audience, he said: "This, friends, is the only question I feel authorized to ask these persons. Christ said, 'Upon this rock I will build my church,' meaning, as I understand, the truth expressed by Peter when he said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Hence it came to pass, after the church was established, the apostles admitted only those who, through faith in His divinity, were willing to receive Christ as the lawgiver of the Christian dispensation, whose every command they should feel themselves under obligations to obey."

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Then, turning to the table, he removed the linen cloth that covered the emblems, and announced that the opportunity of communing with their Lord, through the medium of the ordinance which He had instituted and left for the purpose of commemorating His death and suffering, would now be accorded all those who desired to avail themselves of the privilege.

At the close of the communion service a song was sung, during which time as many as felt disposed went to the front and extended to the new converts the hand of congratulation and good will. The preacher then announced that, at four o'clock, they would meet at the creek to attend to the ordinance of baptism, and at the church again at eight for the evening service.

After the benediction had been pronounced, Mr. Lane proceeded to the front, and invited the preacher to go home with him. The invitation was accepted.

CHAPTER VI.

BAPTISM OF JOHN DREW AND OTHERS

WHEN they had reached the house and were seated in the parlor, Mr. Lane said: "My object in inviting you home with me, Bro. Birch, was to have an interview with you concerning the present state of the church. The time was when I was a friend to denominationalism; in fact, I thought the different denominations a necessity, in order to accommodate the various opinions of men on the subject of religion; but I have come to regard them as not only unnecessary, but a positive evil, and the question I am now seeking light upon is, Is there any remedy for this evil?"

"Yes, there is a remedy for it, Bro. Lane, but the great difficulty is in getting the people willing to apply it. The remedy consists in a return to the teaching and practice of those who composed the church in the apostolic age, as their teaching and practice have been handed down to us on the pages of sacred history. The remedy would be applied, and the evil cured in this community, if the Christian people of this town were to get together and agree that henceforth there should be but one church in this town, and that they would all belong to that one church, and that, both as individuals and as a church, they would wear only such

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names as the word of God authorized them to wear, and that, in the matter of presenting to the world the terms of reconciliation with God and admission into His church, and to members of the church the duties of Christian living, their teaching and practice should conform to the teaching and practice of the inspired apostles and those who composed the early church, as their teaching and practice have been revealed to us through the New Testament Scriptures.”

“Your remedy, Bro. Birch, seems to be a very simple one, and I see no reason why it may not be applied. Certainly, for the sake of union, every one should be willing to lay aside those things which are foreign to the teaching of the Bible, and teach and practice those things which the Bible clearly authorizes. At any rate, the result to be attained is certainly worthy of an effort, and I, for one, am heartily in favor of making the attempt.”

At this juncture Mrs. Lane appeared at the door, and invited them out to dinner.

After dinner, the whole family being seated in the parlor, Mrs. Lane began the conversation by saying: “I never understood before, Bro. Birch, why you people were not ‘Campbellites,’ but your sermon this morning made it plain enough to my mind. I had always regarded Mr. Campbell as the organizer of the Christian Church and as the inventor of a certain system of doctrine to which all must subscribe in order to membership in that church. The idea of his being merely a sign-board, pointing a divided Christendom back to the apostolic church and advising them, for

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the sake of unity, to lay aside all human creeds and systems of doctrine formulated by men, and accept in their stead the system of doctrine formulated by Christ and His apostles, had never occurred to my mind, and I think it high time the religious world was heeding the sign-board and getting back to that unity of faith and practice that was characteristic of the early church."

"I am truly glad, Sister Lane, to know that your mind has been disabused of those erroneous ideas concerning the nature of Mr. Campbell's work. I would that all understood the real nature of his work, for then, I am sure, it would appeal to them favorably."

Leaving the Lanes to entertain Bro. Birch, let us step over to Mr. Drew's for a few moments. Mr. and Mrs. Potter, Mr. and Mrs. Blair and Mrs. Fowler are all there. They are all members of the Baptist Church, save Mr. Blair, who is not a member of any.

The Drew family had not yet finished their noon-day meal when these guests came in, and, after welcoming them into her home and seeing them comfortably seated, Mrs. Drew asked them to excuse her for a few moments, and returned to the dining-room.

"Don't you think Mrs. Drew looks dreadfully bad?" asked Mrs. Potter of Mrs. Blair, after Mrs. Drew had left the room.

"I can not say that I noticed any change in her," responded Mrs. Blair, "unless it be in the matter of her speech. She doesn't seem quite as talkative and jovial as she usually is."

"Oh, I think she looks dreadfully bad. But, poor thing, she has reason enough for looking bad and

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feeling bad too. Just think of it, last Sunday Evelyn joined the Methodist Church, and now John has gone and joined the Christian Church. Since his wife was already a Baptist, I think it would have been much more becoming in him to have joined with her."

"I feel impelled to differ with you, Mrs. Potter. I think it much more becoming in John to do as he has done, if he conscientiously believes that to be the way the Lord would have him go. I have very little confidence in that person's religion who has no higher motive in joining the church than simply to please some one else. It seems to me, Mrs. Potter, that when a person, by means of the truth, becomes convicted of sin, that the great question with him should be, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' and then, having been brought to a knowledge of the Lord's will, whether by his own personal investigation of revealed truth or by the preached Word, it is his duty to go forward in obedience thereto, regardless of the position occupied by either relatives or friends," said Mr. Blair.

"Well, but don't you think a person can live a Christian just as well in one church as in another?" asked Mrs. Potter, just as Mr. Drew and his wife came into the room.

"I think that depends altogether upon the person," said Mr. Drew. "Take, for instance, a person who has no conscientious convictions along the line of doctrinal truth, and I presume that person could live in one church just as well as in another. But, upon the other hand, take a person who has conscientious

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convictions along such lines, and I maintain that he can not. For example, take a man who conscientiously believes denominationalism to be wrong, who believes it to be contrary to the teaching of Christ and His apostles, who believes that when Christ prayed that His disciples 'may be one,' he meant it. How could a person like that conscientiously live in a church, the set policy of which is to teach the opposite of what he believes to be right? How could he consistently give of his means to support a preacher to go out and uphold denominationalism when he believes it to be wrong? Although I have said little about it, yet it was this very thing that has kept me out of the church up to this time. I never did believe that denominationism, as taught and practiced in the religious world to-day, was right. I never did believe that God intended His church to be cut up into rival sects, so hostile to each other as to make it necessary to have five or six church-houses in a town where otherwise one would be sufficient. It was not so in the beginning of the church's history. The apostles never planted a half-dozen churches in the same little town. One local congregation of believers in each town or community was considered by them to be sufficient; and, having learned to-day of a people whose mission it is to restore the church to its primitive unity in faith and practice, I decided to cast in my lot with theirs, and let the influence of my life, whether great or small, go out in the direction of organic union."

"It's an old saying, Mr. Drew, that 'charity begins at home,' so your first task will be to unite your own

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house," said Mrs. Potter, winking at Mrs. Drew as she finished the sentence.

"Yes, I recognize that as my first task, Mrs. Potter, but I am not anticipating any serious trouble in accomplishing it. Mrs. Drew has already told me that she is open to conviction, and has assured me of her willingness to walk in any pathway that the word of God might direct. And, as for Evelyn, the very day she united with the church she formed a resolution to make the word of God alone her rule of faith and practice; and, when three persons start out with the avowed intention of conforming their lives to the teaching of God's word, I see no reason why they should not get together."

"I don't care to rob you, Mr. Drew, of the pleasure that comes to you in believing your task an easy one, but I venture the prediction that you will change your mind before it is completed. I've known Mattie Drew longer than you have, and I'll miss my guess if she doesn't live and die a Baptist. Her ancestors were Baptists as far back as she has any knowledge of them, and you know yourself what staunch Baptists her father and mother are. Why, Mr. Drew, old Bro. Bowles would never forgive you, neither in this world nor the next, if you were to make a 'Campbellite' out of his daughter."

"I think you are rather jumping at conclusions, Mrs. Potter, in thinking that I am going to make a 'Campbellite,' or any other kind of an 'ite,' out of her. I said a moment ago that Mrs. Drew, Evelyn and I had all agreed to make the Bible our rule of faith and

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practice, and I hardly think that living up to that agreement would make a 'Campbellite' out of her, inasmuch as the word 'Campbellite' is nowhere found in the Bible. But I shall have to ask you people to excuse me for a short while, as I have some arrangements to make in the matter of providing conveyances to take us to the creek, and I would be pleased to provide for as many of you as desire to go and have no conveyance."

"Thank you, Mr. Drew, but I have my surrey in town, and if Mr. Potter and wife and Mrs. Fowler desire to go, they will be perfectly welcome to go with us, so you need only to arrange for the members of your own family," said Mr. Blair.

After Mr. Drew had gone, the guests remained silent a few moments. Finally, Mrs. Potter, turning to the other women, said: "Were you not all somewhat surprised at Mr. and Mrs. Hughes joining the church this morning?"

"It was a surprise to me," responded Mrs. Blair. "I had counted on them uniting with the Baptist Church."

"What right had you to think they would? Had they ever expressed themselves as inclined that way?" asked Mr. Blair.

"No, I can't say that I ever heard them express a preference for any particular church; but the Baptists have always taken such an interest in them ever since they came to town. Really, I know of but two or three of the members of the Christian Church who have visited them, while a great number of ours have

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called to see them. And, besides, it was generally understood that the social we gave at the church was given in their honor, and I should think those things would have had some influence upon them in the matter of selecting a church home, but it seems they didn't."

"No, they didn't, wife, and I am glad of it. I never did approve of the custom so many churches have fallen into, that of trying to tole people in with taffy, ice-cream and such like things. The custom is wrong in principle. The logic of denominationalism is that each church stands for certain doctrinal truths, apart from the one great truth relating to the divinity of Christ, which all hold in common, and that these truths are, in importance, so great as to prevent those believing them from worshipping God acceptably with those who do not. So, if the principle of denominationalism is right, it follows that only those who believe the doctrines peculiar to a certain church ought to belong to that church; and, instead of you folks running after the Hughes family with ice-cream and taffy, you should have gone to them with a plain statement of the doctrinal truths peculiar to your church, and frankly said to them: 'Friends, here is a statement as to what we believe and teach; if you can accept it, we shall be pleased to have you come into fellowship with us.' But, upon the other hand, if the principle of denominationalism isn't right—in other words, if it isn't necessary, as your custom of toling people into the church would seem to indicate, that all should believe alike the doctrinal truths taught by a particular church in order to membership therein—then denomi-

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nationalism exists without a cause, and you had just as well pull down your denominational walls, and have but one church. If a person can be a member of a denominational church without believing all the doctrines taught by that church, I see no reason why he couldn't be a member of an undenominational one, even though he may disagree with his brethren over many things of minor importance taught by it. So, it seems to me, a better way would be to do away with all denominational churches, and let us have, in their stead, one grand church, built upon the great central truth of the Bible—namely, Jesus the Christ of God and Saviour of men—and then let that one church reflect to the world, through the conduct of its individual members, that spirit of brotherly love that was characteristic of the early church, and ice-cream socials would no longer be needed as a means of toling men and women; but, beholding its beauty, they would press into it.”

“I want to say, Mr. Blair,” said Mrs. Fowler, “that I heartily agree with your one-church idea. I never could persuade myself to believe that God intended His church to be cut up into rival sects as it is to-day, and I shall hail with delight the day when divisions shall be no more.”

At the appointed hour a goodly number of people assembled on the bank of the creek, a short distance from town, to witness the baptism of those who had confessed their faith in Christ. After the six who had made the confession at the morning service had all been immersed, Mrs. Watson approached the preacher

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at the water's edge, and asked that she, too, be baptized. The preacher, in the language of Philip to the eunuch, said: "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest;" and she said, "I do believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," and he baptized her.

CHAPTER VII.

PAVING THE WAY FOR UNION

AT eight o'clock quite a large audience assembled at the church, and the preacher, taking advantage of the opportunity, preached a strong sermon on the subject of Christian union, basing his remarks on the words of Christ addressed to His Father in that memorable prayer which He offered just before He was betrayed, and which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John: "Father, I pray not for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word, that they may all be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou didst send me."

I shall not attempt to give even a synopsis of the sermon, but will proceed to note some of the results.

The subject of Christian union was the chief topic of conversation among the people of the town during the remainder of the week. They discussed it in their homes, in their places of business and on the street corners. In fact, wherever you saw a group of men engaged in earnest conversation, you were pretty safe in concluding they were discussing the subject of Christian union, for it was the all-absorbing theme. Some

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were opposing, but by far the majority were heartily in favor of it.

One of the most heated discussions occurred one morning in the bank. The bank was a corner building, with a front entrance on the main street of the town and a rear entrance on one of the side streets. When Mr. Middleton, the cashier, came down that morning to open up, he entered the building at the side door, and had scarcely gotten inside when Mr. Potter came along, and, thrusting his head in at the door, said:

"Say, Middleton, how are you on this church-union proposition? Do you think it will work?"

"That depends altogether on the people, Mr. Potter. I am sure the Lord is willing to do His part toward making it work, and, if the people will only do theirs, I see no reason why it shouldn't work. And, now, what do you think about it?"

"I am decidedly against it. I don't think it would work at all. Why, Mr. Middleton, if it were possible, and the churches should all be united into one, it would only be a repetition of the history of the church under Catholicism, and I, for one, don't care to see that history repeated."

By this time several others had joined them, and Mr. Middleton invited them to come inside. When they were all seated, he said:

"You will agree, Mr. Potter, to the truthfulness of the old adage that 'like causes always produce like results,' will you not?"

"Yes, sir, I am perfectly willing to admit that statement true."

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“Well, now, we all know that, under the reign of Catholicism, the church became exceedingly corrupt, but there was a cause for that corruption. Judging from your argument, you would have us believe that cause was the oneness of the church.”

“Yes, sir, that is my argument exactly. I maintain that corruption was due to the fact that there was but one church.”

“Well, now, I am going to prove to you that that wasn’t the cause. That period in the world’s history, known as the ‘Dark Ages,’ was not the only period in which the church existed as a unit, but all through the first, second and third centuries there was only the one church, and yet those were the most prosperous years in the church’s history. Now, you have admitted that like causes produce like results, and if the corruption that existed in the church during the Dark Ages was the result of the unity of the church at that time, then, since like causes produce like results, the same results should have followed the unity of the church during the first three centuries. But since no such results followed, therefore we are forced to the conclusion that something else, and not the unity of the church, was the cause of that corruption.”

“Well, if the unity of the church was not the cause of the corruption, then what was?” retorted Mr. Potter, in a tone indicating anger.

“I’ll give you my opinion on the subject, free of cost, if you will promise to be good and not get angry.”

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“Well, go on with your argument; I am not as angry, perhaps, as you think.”

“Very well, then. Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, speaking of the second coming of Christ, assures us that event will not come until ‘there first be a falling away, and that man of sin be revealed, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God; so that he, as God sitting in the temple of God, setteth himself forth as God.’ What prophet of Old Testament history, Mr. Potter, ever drew a truer picture of an event or person than future than is drawn by the apostle Paul in this prophetic utterance, when applied to the Roman pontiffs, who ruled the apostate church during the Dark Ages? Under their rule, Christ, the great Head of the church, was practically deposed, and the Pope beame head in His stead. Under their rule, the Bible, given to the church by divine inspiration as a rule of faith and practice, was practically set aside and buried beneath the rubbish of pontifical decrees and mandates of councils appointed by him, until both priest and laity were absolute strangers to many of its simplest truths. Under their rule, the great Bible doctrine of justification by faith and obedience to the divine will of God was rendered inoperative by the pontifical decree authorizing the sale of indulgences and offering unto men pardon and absolution upon the payment of a certain price. It was in that usurpation of power and authority by the Roman pontiffs that the cause is to be found for the corruption that then existed in the church, Mr. Potter, and not in the fact that the church

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was a unit. In contrast with this second period of church history place the first (the first three centuries), and note the difference. In the first period Christ, and not the Pope, was the recognized head of the church. Again, in that period the Bible, and not the decrees and mandates of councils appointed by the Pope, was the recognized rule of faith and practice for the church. In that period also faith in Christ and obedience to His divine will was the procuring cause of pardon, and not the payment to the Pope of certain fees. It was because of the fact, Mr. Potter, that the church, during the first three centuries, recognized Christ as its head and His word as its rule of faith and practice that it was able to maintain its unity and prosper. And it was because of the fact that the church, during the Dark Ages, recognized the Pope as its head and his decrees as its rule of conduct that it became vile and corrupt. Therefore, when we speak of reuniting the churches, it is understood, of course, that we mean such a union as existed in the first period, recognizing Christ as our head and His word as our guide, and not such as existed in the second period, recognizing the Pope as our head and human laws as our guide."

"Say, Middleton, has this bank gone out of business and closed its front doors for good, or is it a legal holiday—which? I've been waiting a full half-hour for it to open," said a farmer, as he pushed open the side door and looked in.

"No, Mr. Wade, this isn't a holiday, neither have we suspended business entirely, though I admit it may

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seem so to an outsider, as it's a full half-hour past the time for opening, and the front door still closed. Really, I had forgotten it. However, Mr. Wade, if there are any damages due you for this neglect, I hope you will look to Mr. Potter for settlement, for he's the cause of the whole thing."

"Well, I never knew before that Mr. Potter was a man of influence sufficient to stop the business of a town like this."

"The fact is, Mr. Wade, Mr. Potter has been, for some time, afflicted with mental hallucination on a certain subject, and we've been operating on him this morning. We can't tell yet what the result of the operation will be, but we are hopeful it will do him good."

"What, may I ask, is the subject that is causing him trouble?"

"It's the subject of Christian union. Mr. Potter has gotten the idea into his head that, if the churches were united in one organization, it would soon become corrupt."

"Well, I should like to see the experiment tried. Nothing disgusts me more than the present divided state of Christendom. But, by the way, this is the third crowd I've seen this morning discussing that subject. What does it mean, anyway?"

"It means that the people are waking up and getting their eyes open to the evils of denominationalism," said Mr. Middleton, "and it wouldn't surprise me if their waking up didn't result in some definite steps being taken toward the overthrow of denominationalism

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and the establishment of an organic union among the churches of the town."

"Well, all I have to say at this time is that you can count me on the side of union. I'm a Presbyterian, but I will willingly surrender any of my Presbyterian peculiarities that stand in the way of a union based upon the teaching of God's word. But, say, Middleton, you had better go and open that front door, or the people will begin to think there's something wrong with this institution sure enough."

"Very well; I'll go and do it right now before I forget it."

The first persons to enter the building after the door was opened were Messrs. Lane and Sims.

"We have been hunting for you the greater part of an hour, Bro. Middleton, and we were about to settle down to the belief that you had left town under cover of darkness and gone to parts unknown, after the custom of others belonging to your craft."

"Well, I am happy to inform you, Bro. Lane, that I am still here, and ready to serve you in whatever way I can."

"Then, since you are at leisure, and have voluntarily expressed your willingness to serve us, I shall at once proceed to state to you the object of our coming.

"You have doubtless noticed that the question of Christian union is, at present, engaging the attention of the people of our town more perhaps than ever before, and, since the benefits to be derived from such a union would, in our estimation, be of inestimable

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value to us all, therefore Bro. Sims and I have taken it upon ourselves to try to induce the churches at least to make an effort in that direction. After thinking the matter over, we concluded that, perhaps, the best way to proceed would be to call a mass-meeting of the citizens of the town and community, and let them discuss the matter. Accordingly, we have written out a notice, which we purpose having printed in our town paper, and which reads as follows:

“ ‘WHEREAS, Our blessed Lord, at the close of His earthly ministry, and just before He offered up His life in voluntary sacrifice upon the cross, prayed that His disciples might “all be one,” even as He and the Father were one, to the end that the world might believe that the Father had sent Him; and

“ ‘WHEREAS, His early disciples, in harmony with that prayer, did remain one throughout the apostolic age and for two centuries succeeding, during which time the church was greatly prospered, in spite of the opposition of its enemies; and

“ ‘WHEREAS, The disciples of Christ in the world to-day have suffered themselves to be divided up into rival sects, so unlike each other in doctrine and practice as to make it necessary for them to have separate houses in which to worship and separate preachers to serve them;

“ ‘*Therefore*, We, the undersigned members of the several churches of Alpha, believing such a state of the church to be contrary to the spirit of the Lord’s Prayer and detrimental to His cause, beseech, request and urge that every Christian in our town and the

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community surrounding, together with as many others as feel an interest in the matter, meet *en masse* at the Baptist Church at seven-thirty o'clock, Wednesday evening of the week next after the publication of this notice, for the purpose of considering collectively our present condition, if haply it may lead us into a closer Christian fellowship with each other and with God.

“ ‘And it is further requested that every Christian before leaving his home avail himself of the privilege God has accorded His children in this life of approaching Him at a throne of grace, and there plead for that spiritual perception and wisdom which God has promised to those who ask Him, that our work may rest, not upon the flimsy foundation of human wisdom alone, but upon the more enduring foundation of human wisdom, touched and molded by the divine Spirit of God.’ ”

“This, Bro. Middleton, is the plan which we have adopted for getting the matter before the people, and we have come to you for your signature as a representative of the Christian Church, provided, of course, you think the plan a good one; otherwise, we shall be glad to consider any plan you may suggest for accomplishing the desired end.”

“I think your plan a good one, Bro. Lane, and I rejoice in the privilege of co-operating with you in so good a cause,” said Mr. Middleton, as he wrote down his name.

“If you want a Presbyterian’s name attached to the document, and know of no other you would rather

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have, mine is at your service, Bro. Lane," suggested Mr. Wade.

"Yours will be just as acceptable as any, Bro. Wade, so you may just write it down. Now, if we can get one of the 'Brethren' to sign it, we shall then have a representative from each church."

"If you will just wait here a few minutes, I think I can bring you one who will sign it," said Mr. Drew, as he hurried out the front door.

In a very few minutes he returned, bringing with him Mr. Sullivan, the blacksmith.

"Yes, I'll sign it, and glad of the chance," he said when he had read it over; and, after affixing his signature, he handed it back to Bro. Lane, saying: "Now, go on and publish to the world the fact that the Christian people of Alpha are tired of denominationalism, and desire to return to that unity of the Spirit and bond of peace that characterized the church in its early history."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EDITOR AND CHRISTIAN UNION

WHILE the subject of Christian union had, for several days past, been the chief topic of conversation in the town, yet the interest that had been manifested seemed tame when put into contrast with the interest that was manifested after the publication of the above notice. The editor had given it space in the center of the first page. A square, in length and breadth equal to the width of three columns, was surrounded by a host of miniature doves with outspread wings. At the top of the square was an open Bible, and beneath, in large headline letters, were the words:

“DENOMINATIONALISM DOOMED TO DIE.”

And then, to give additional emphasis to his headlines, lance-like darts, emanating from the open pages of the Bible, were thrust through each of the letters in the word “Denominationalism.” In addition to giving the notice the most conspicuous place in his paper, he also published in the same issue an editorial in which the evils of denominationalism and the benefits of organic union were both discussed in a masterly way, closing his article with a strong appeal to all Christians to lay aside all prejudice, and come to the proposed meeting with only one thought and purpose

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in mind, and that to know and do the will of the Lord. The editor was a member of the Presbyterian Church, and to him was due no little credit for the success of the movement that had been launched. The editor occupies a unique position in a community. The conduct of persons is largely the result of the thoughts they entertain; and, as the editor is a molder of thoughts, it is easy to see his relationship to the conduct of the people among whom he labors. What a grand thing it would be if all editors were devout Christians, and thoroughly Pauline in their denunciation of the party spirit among Christians. In that case, they would be a mighty factor in the world for the promotion of the cause of union among the people of God.

But, alas! all are not Christians, and many who are not Pauline on the subject of Christian union, and hence their influence is divided—some for and some against. But the editor of the *Alpha Weekly* was heartily in favor of union, and when that issue containing the notice of the mass-meeting and the strong editorial on the subject of union was put before the public, the whole town and community surrounding became thoroughly aroused.

The subject of Christian union was discussed from morning till night. Telephones were pressed into service, and even before the noon hour of Friday the news of the proposed meeting was known in many of the surrounding towns and villages, in one of which Bro. Mason, the Baptist preacher, lived. When the news was made known to him, he decided at once to

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go to Alpha that afternoon, instead of waiting until Saturday, as he had been accustomed to do.

When he reached the town that afternoon, he went direct to the home of Mr. Potter, where he found a paper and read the notice, and also the article written by the editor.

"It seems to me, Bro. Potter," he said, as he laid the paper aside, "that Bro. Sims is taking undue authority in permitting a meeting of that kind to be held in the Baptist Church. Did he consult any one about it? But, of course, not; why should I ask such a question, since I know the man so well? It is not characteristic of him to consult any one as to matters of conduct."

"I am sure you are mistaken about that, Bro. Mason. I think you will find, upon investigation, that he consulted all of the trustees before granting such permission."

"Well, all I have to say is I have very little faith in such a meeting resulting in any good, and I shall tell them so Sunday morning in no uncertain tones. I regard the whole thing a species of rebellion against God. I believe it was for wise and beneficent reasons that God permitted His church to be divided up as it is to-day, and I further believe that, in His own good time and way, God Himself will bring all these contending parties into unison."

Bro. Mason spent the remainder of the afternoon and Saturday visiting among his brethren, and was greatly surprised to find at least two out of every three whom he visited decidedly in favor of the new move-

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ment, a revelation which served to swerve him from the course he had planned to pursue, and on Sunday morning, instead of bitterly denouncing the union movement and its supporters, he preached a strong sermon along the line of Christian living.

Greatly to the surprise of Bro. Lane, Bro. Clark, when he came, expressed himself as heartily in favor of the proposed mass-meeting.

"My mind has undergone a few changes regarding the subject of Christian union since I talked with you two weeks ago," he said, while they were sitting together in Mr. Lane's home, "and I am glad you have called this meeting. It will do no harm to get together and talk the matter over, and may do great good."

"I am pleased to find you frank enough to admit an error when you have been convinced of it, Bro. Clark. I fear that some of our preachers, and laymen, too, are lacking in such frankness; and, to my mind, that lack of frankness to admit an error is going to be one of the chief obstacles in the way of organic union."

"I believe you are right, Bro. Lane; there is something in humanity that makes it difficult for a person to recant a position which he has taken before the public; but, if a man will only use a little common sense, he will find sufficient evidence of his fallibility to convince him of the possibility of his being, or having been, in error at some time in life. In my estimation, he is much more a man who will confess an error and turn from it, than he who will continue in it after having been convinced."

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“You have spoken my sentiments, exactly, Bro. Clark, and I trust that, in the work which now lies before us, we may all be able to ‘acquit ourselves like men.’ ”

On the “Lord’s Day” Bro. Clark was at his best, and preached two strong sermons to good audiences, and the general verdict of those who heard him was that they had been edified and strengthened. He also spoke of the coming meeting, and urged all to be sure and attend.

The five men whose names were signed to the public notice met in conference Sunday afternoon at the home of Mr. Sullivan, the blacksmith, for the purpose of outlining a course of procedure for the Wednesday evening meeting. After some discussion, it was decided to have one main address, dealing with the church from a twofold standpoint: First, “As God Intended It to Be,” and, second, “As It Really Is.” Following this, a brief address, designed to show the extent of agreement already existing between the five churches of the town.

This course was adopted hoping that, after the people had caught a glimpse of the ideal church in contrast with the real, and had had their attention called to the agreement already existing between them, they would then be the more willing to adjust those petty differences which were in the way of their union.

The work of preparing and delivering the first address was imposed on Mr. Middleton by his four associates, while Mr. Combs, the editor, was to be asked to deliver the second.

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The question of inviting the preachers to attend the meeting was brought up, and, after some discussion, it was decided to send each of them a formal invitation, to which should be attached the same signatures which appeared in the published notice. These invitations were prepared at once, and personally delivered to Bros. Clark and Mason at the evening service. The others were sent through the mail. Mr. Sims delivered the invitation to Bro. Mason when he went to the service that evening. After he had read it, he said: "I shall not be here. I shall just let them run it to suit themselves."

"I trust, Bro. Mason, you will change your mind between this and Wednesday, and decide to come."

"I shall have to change my mind, Bro. Sims, if I am here," he said, as he turned and walked away.

Interest in the coming meeting increased with each succeeding day. At six o'clock Wednesday evening all the business houses in the town were closed for the day. When Mr. Lane went over to the Baptist Church at seven o'clock, he found it filled to its utmost capacity. Approaching a group of men who were standing on the outside, he said:

"Brethren, what are we to do? We are not going to be able to make this meeting a success under conditions like this. It is my candid opinion that this house will not accommodate one-half of the people who will be here. It is full now, and yet it is a full half-hour until the time for the service to begin."

"Where there's a will, there's a way," said Mr. Drew. "It's only a short distance over to the amphi-

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theater at the Fairgrounds—just a few minutes' walk. Why not hold the meeting there?"

"That would have been an ideal place for such a meeting, had we only thought of it in time to have made the necessary arrangements."

"All the necessary arrangements can be made for the meeting to begin on time, if you think that the place to hold it."

"It's the only place that will accommodate the crowd, Bro. Drew, and if you think you can perfect the arrangements in so short a time, I say do it."

"I can do it with the assistance of eight or ten men."

"Well, we'll see if there are not that number of men here who are willing to help you. Those of you who are willing to volunteer your services will please step over on this side. There, Bro. Drew, is a whole dozen at your service, and it is now up to you to make good your promise."

"With this army of assistants, I think we shall make good. You, Bro. Lane, may just wait here until a quarter after seven, then adjourn the audience to meet at the amphitheater at seven-thirty, by which time I promise you we will have all things ready."

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"Well, Bro. Drew, you have redeemed your promise in grand style," exclaimed Mr. Lane, twenty-five minutes later, when he appeared at the amphitheater, and saw him and several others sitting in chairs upon a commodious rostrum which they had erected by placing one end of heavy boards upon one of the seats of

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the amphitheater and supporting the center and outer ends with trestles. Upon either side of the rostrum was an upright piece, each supporting a gasoline torch. Other torches were hung here and there upon posts which supported the roof of the amphitheater. A long table, used by the Fair Association for exhibiting fruits, had been placed on the rostrum to serve both as a pulpit and desk for the clerk to write on.

“It is just an ideal place and an ideal evening, and I trust we shall have an ideal meeting,” said Mr. Lane, as he stepped upon the rostrum, and laid his Bible upon the table.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MASS-MEETING

PROMPTLY at seven-thirty Mr. Combs, the editor, stepped upon the rostrum, and, after rapping for order, said: "Ladies and gentlemen, when last week I published to the world (or as much of the world as my little paper reaches) the notice of this meeting, it was with a fervent prayer to God that the people of this town would heed the call, and give to this meeting the inspiration of their presence. When I looked out over this audience, by far the greatest religious audience that has ever assembled in our town, I said to myself, God has answered my prayer. But, in conversation with some of the brethren a few moments ago, I found mine was not the only prayer that had been offered, but that perhaps scores of others during the past week have prayed for the same thing. So I no longer look upon this audience as an answer to my prayer alone, but as an answer to the combined prayers of perhaps scores of men and women who have grown tired of divisions and who desire union.

"But merely meeting together as we have this evening is not going to remove the barriers which stand in the way of our union. To do this requires work—a work that calls for the very best faculties of mind

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and heart. Yea, and more also; we shall need that heavenly wisdom which God has promised to give liberally to those of His children who ask in faith. So, with a consciousness of our own weakness, let us humbly bow ourselves before God, while a number of the brethren, and sisters, too, in brief, but earnest, prayer shall ask God for His guidance in our deliberations."

When the season of prayer was over, the congregation sang that old song beginning

"Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free?
No, there's a cross for every one,
And there's a cross for me."

Mr. Combs: "It may be that some of us will be called upon to bear unexpected crosses in order to consummate the union we have in mind, but I trust, brethren, that no cross, however great, will deter us from doing our whole duty. Now, in order that we may better proceed with our work, it will be necessary for you to select some one to act as chairman, and also some one to serve as clerk."

Mr. Lane was chosen for the former position, and Mr. Jones for the latter.

Mr. Lane: "I thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the honor you have conferred upon me in calling me to preside at this meeting, which, in my estimation, promises to be the most important ever held within the corporate limits of our little town—important because of its common bearing upon all. In my estimation, there is not a person here, whether Christian or otherwise, but would feel that he had been benefited should

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the object of the meeting be fully realized. Think what it would mean to the Christian element of our town and community to have sectarianism; with its consequent bitterness, prejudice and strife, forever driven from our midst, and Christian union, with its consequent peace, good will and brotherly love, installed in its stead. Think what it would mean to the non-Christian element if, instead of seeing the church of Jesus Christ all cut up into rival sects and warring against each other, that element should behold Christians all dwelling together in unity, manifesting toward each other the spirit of brotherly love and helpfulness in time of need. Think you not that such a sight would have a tendency to convince them that there is indeed a reality in the Christian religion? It certainly would, my friends, and to bring about such a state is the object of our coming together this evening.

“I am glad to see at least three of our town pastors present. I had hoped that all of them would be here, and take part in our deliberations. While the laity is responsible for the inauguration of this movement, yet there was no disposition on the part of any to in any way ignore the clergy. Indeed, but for the knowledge we had of the fact that at least two of our preachers were opposed to organic union, the pastors themselves would have been asked to call this meeting; but, with two of them opposed to organic union, we felt that the only course which bade fair of success was for the laity to take the matter up and invite the preachers to co-operate, which we did.”

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Mr. Potter: "I will say, Bro. Lane, that my boy has gone to the station to meet Bro. Mason, whom we were expecting on the train which passed through a few minutes ago, and I presume he will be here shortly."

Mr. Middleton: "Permit me also, Mr. Chairman, to read, in explanation of Bro. Birch's absence, a brief note which I received from him to-day: 'Dear Bro. Middleton—Please tender to those brethren responsible for the invitation I received Monday to be present at the meeting this evening my sincere thanks for the same, and tell them that, while I can not be present because of a funeral service I am called upon to conduct this afternoon, yet they have my prayers and the very best wishes of my heart for the success of the undertaking. Yours fraternally, J. C. Birch.' "

While Mr. Middleton was reading the above note, Bro. Mason, accompanied by Mr. Potter's son, came, and was seated near Mr. and Mrs. Potter.

Mr. Lane: "I regret very much Bro. Birch's inability to be here. Now that Bro. Mason has come, we have all our pastors present save him. However, we are glad to know that he is in sympathy with us, and that we are to have the benefit of his prayers. We are now ready to proceed with the program, and the first item is an address by Bro. Middleton on the subject, 'The Church as Seen from a Twofold Standpoint: First, As God Intended It to Be, and, second, As It Really Is.' "

Mr. Middleton: "I want to read you a single verse of Scripture. I shall read the fifteenth verse of the

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third chapter of 1 Timothy: 'But that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.' These words were addressed by the apostle Paul to Timothy. I have not read this verse as a text from which to preach a sermon, but merely because of a phrase which it contains. From this verse we learn that there is an institution here upon earth, known as the 'church of the living God,' to which Timothy belonged, and Paul, in his letter to Timothy, was giving him instructions how to live as a member of that institution. In my estimation, the church is the grandest institution ever inaugurated upon the earth. Men have devised a great many institutions having for their object the welfare of humanity, but these all sink into insignificance when compared with the church of the living God. As the heavens are higher than the earth, and as God's thoughts are higher than the thoughts of men, so the church of the living God stands triumphantly above every other institution that has ever been inaugurated upon the earth, having for its object not only man's temporal, but his spiritual, welfare as well.

"I want to speak first of the 'Ideal Church,' and then of the 'Real.' I use the term 'Ideal Church' to represent the church as it existed in the mind of God, or as God intended it to be, and I use the term 'Real Church' to represent the church as it has actually existed upon the earth. Now, that there is a wide difference between the ideal and the real, I freely admit, but that difference can be accounted for, in part at

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least, upon the ground that the ideal is the work of God alone, while the real is the work of God and man combined. In other words, the real church, as it has actually existed here upon the earth, simply represents the efforts of man to reach the divine ideal; but when we trace the history of man from his creation down to the present time, we find that he has ever proven himself to be a weak and erring creature, full of imperfections and shortcomings, and these imperfections and shortcomings of man have been stamped upon the real church in every age of its existence. Perhaps the nearest approach the real church has ever made to the divine ideal was during the apostolic age; but even the apostolic church, excepting a few years of its very earliest history, fell short of the divine ideal, for there were imperfections even in the apostolic church. But it may be asked, Why has God placed before man an ideal that he has never been able to attain? Why did He not lower the standard? I answer, God could not, in harmony with His nature, have done otherwise than to have placed before man a perfect ideal. God Himself is perfect, and everything that emanates from Him is perfect. Man himself was a perfect being when he came from the creative hand of God, made, we are told, in the very likeness and image of God Himself. This old earth of ours was a perfect world when it rolled from God's creative hand to take its place in the great system of worlds that was to make up the universe. There was not a single thorn nor thistle nor noxious weed to mar its beauty and its grandeur. These things are the result

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of man's imperfections and shortcomings; man's failure to live up to the divine ideal; not of his inability, but of his failure. God hasn't placed before man an ideal that it is impossible for him to reach, but, on the contrary, every provision of the gospel is clearly within the power of man to attain.

"Let us, then, take a look into the ideal church, and note some of the characteristics of those who compose it. I raise the question: What is the ideal church? I answer, first, negatively, by saying the ideal church is not a structure of wood or stone or brick, graven by art and man's device, adorned and embellished until it dazzles with its beauty and grandeur—not that; neither is it the more humble structure, erected by loyal souls at the sacrifice even of the necessities of life. These things are but the shell, the outer casing, and are no more the church of the living God than are the houses in which we live, the families they contain. What, then, is the ideal church? The ideal church is an association of men and women under Christ as their great head and leader, hence we read that 'God put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things in the church.' In the ideal church, then, we have presented to the mind the picture of a great body composed of men and women, and the whole body moving about under the direction of Christ, its great head and leader.

"But this grand company of men and women who compose the church, or body, of Christ were not drawn promiscuously out from the world, but they are persons who, having come in contact with certain great

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truths, accepted them and incorporated them into their lives, and were by them transformed into new, and, when compared with their former selves, into peculiar, persons; persons recognizing God as their common Father and Jesus Christ as their common brother, under whose leadership they hope, by and by, to reach that heavenly Canaan He has gone to prepare for them. And here, my friends, in this grand company of men and women, bound together under Christ with the strong cords of Christian love and fellowship, is to be found the ideal church of the living God, whether they have a house in which to worship or not.

“Let us now notice some of the characteristics of those who composed the ideal church. In the first place, they were a loving people, and their love was an unselfish love, flowing out in every direction toward God and toward man. They loved God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength; they loved His Christ; they loved one another. Indeed, it was that very love which they cherished in their hearts toward each other that was to them the strongest evidence possible of their acceptance with God.

“They knew they had passed from death unto life, not because of some strange vision they had seen or voice they had heard at the time of their conversion, but ‘because they loved the brethren.’

“Again, these people who composed the ideal church were an unselfish people. In this respect they partook of the nature of Christ, their great head, of whom it is said, ‘He pleased not himself,’ but willingly offered up His life in voluntary sacrifice for others; and this

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characteristic of Christ God expected to be exemplified in the lives of His followers. Hence the admonition: 'Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.' Again: 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.' And again: 'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another.'

"Again, those persons who composed the ideal church were a forgiving people. In the ideal church, or church as God intended it to be, there was no such thing as persons living together month after month and year after year without speaking; but when a difficulty arose, steps were immediately taken to remedy it, and the initiatory was always taken by the one least in fault, according to the rule laid down by Christ, when he said: 'If thy brother offend thee, go to him, and between thee and him alone tell him his fault.' And I believe, brethren, that, nine times out of ten, all our difficulties could be adjusted, if we would only proceed according to that rule.

"Again, those people who composed the ideal church were an evangelistic people. They not only enjoyed their religion themselves, but their hearts' desire and prayer to God was that others might be sharers together with them of the blessings of the Christian religion. Hence we find it to be the purpose of God, according to the great commission, that His people should go everywhere preaching to the people the unsearchable riches of Christ; nor were they to cease even under the most bitter persecution that the enemies of Christ could bring upon them.

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“And last, but not least, those who composed the ideal church were a united people. They stood together as one man against a common foe. There were no warring sects among them; no contending parties vying with each other in their efforts to do honor to party leaders, but to them Christ was their all and in all. They recognized Him as the Leader, Lawgiver, Priest and King, and the cry of their hearts was: ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’

“Such, my friends, were some—not all—of the characteristics of those who composed the ideal church, or the church as it existed in the mind of God. But the real church has never attained the divine ideal. As already stated, its nearest approach to the ideal was in the apostolic age; but when we trace the history of the real church from the apostolic age, we find that, after the first three hundred years, there was a gradual decline, a falling away, from the divine ideal, and even from the real, as that church existed in the apostolic age, until, after a period of more than a thousand years, we find the real church at almost opposite poles from the divine ideal. At that period in its history Christ was no longer recognized as its sole and only head, but a rival head had sprung up in the person of the Roman pontiff, claiming equal authority with Christ Himself. Truly, friends, this was the period in the church’s history referred to by Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians, when he said, speaking of the second coming of Christ, that ‘that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

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who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.' Friends, no prophet of Old Testament history ever drew a truer picture of an event or person than future than is drawn by the apostle Paul in this prophetic utterance, when applied to the Roman pontiffs, who ruled the church of the living God during the Dark Ages. Under their rule, Christ, the God-appointed head of the church, was practically deposed, and the Pope became head in His stead, thus literally setting himself forth as God. Under their rule, the Bible, that was given the church by divine inspiration as a guide to Christian conduct, was set aside and buried beneath the rubbish of pontifical decrees and mandates of councils appointed by him, until both priests and laity were as ignorant of its contents as modern scientists are of the interior of the earth. Under their rule, the great doctrine of justification through faith and obedience to the divine will of God, as taught in the New Testament Scriptures, was practically annulled by the pontifical decree authorizing the sale of indulgences, and pardon and absolution were offered unto men upon the payment of a certain price.

"It was against this usurpation of power and authority that Martin Luther hurled his anathemas and started the church on the upgrade again. But it has been more than four hundred years since Martin Luther, in defiance of the power that then ruled the church, turned the switch, as it were, and started the old gospel train back toward that high ideal and per-

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fect brotherhood which God had in mind when He organized it; yet it has never reached it. Indeed, the church, as a whole, has not yet regained the position that the real church occupied in the apostolic age, to say nothing of its having attained the divine ideal. When we take the church of to-day and place it alongside the apostolic church for comparison, we are bound to admit that it is deficient in many important points. In the first place, there is not that Christian love and fellowship that was characteristic of those who composed the apostolic church—that spirit of brotherly love which bound them together as members of the same common family, and made them solicitous for each other's welfare, not alone for their spiritual, but for their temporal, welfare as well. There were no hungry orphans in the apostolic church crying for bread while others were feasting upon the fat of the land. There were no hollow-eyed and careworn widows toiling night and day in an effort to keep the wolf of starvation from their doors, while their sisters in the church, clad in silks and satins, were gadding the streets in luxurious idleness or entertaining an elite club with a seven-course repast.

“My friends, no such conditions as these existed in the apostolic church. There they stood together as members of one common family; rich and poor dwelt upon one common level, and each stood ready to help the other in time of need. Hence we read that ‘the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul,’ and ‘they had all things common; neither were there any among them who lacked, for as many

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as had houses or lands sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid it down at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made to every man according as he had need.'

"Such, friends, was the Christian love and fellowship that existed among those who composed the church of the living God that was organized at Jerusalem in the first century; and I pray God, brethren, that the church of to-day, in her journey from the apostasy of Rome back toward the divine ideal, may soon reach the tablelands of Jerusalem, and catch anew that spirit of brotherly love that will cement into one grand brotherhood the hearts of rich and poor alike, until it can be said of them, as of the disciples of old, that they are 'all of one heart and one soul; neither is there any among them who lack,' for in the church of the living God brother stands ready to help brother, and sister to help sister, in every time of need.

"Brethren, God never intended that His poor and needy ones should seek sympathy and aid through the medium of some fraternal organization apart from His church. In the ideal church, God has made provision to meet all the needs of His children, both temporal and spiritual. Don't think from this statement, friends, that I am an enemy to fraternal organizations, for I am not. I appreciate the work that these organizations have done, and are doing, and I predict they will remain with us as long as there is a need for their existence, and that need will continue as long as the church continues to neglect her duty to the poor and needy, and the church will neglect that duty as long

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as it continues in its present divided state. It can not do otherwise, for the church, as an organization, has rendered itself incompetent to adequately care for the poor and helpless by squandering its means in the work of building rival church-houses and supporting rival preachers, both in the home and in the foreign field.

“Did you ever stop to think what a grand fund the church would have at its command, to be used for benevolent and charitable purposes, if the money spent in building rival church-houses and supporting rival preachers had only been put into a fund to be used for such purposes?

“When we take the church of to-day, with its warring sects and consequent bitterness, strife and envy, and compare it with that grand brotherhood of eighteen hundred years ago, we are bound to admit that it is far below the standard even of the apostolic church, to say nothing of the divine ideal.

“I am aware of the fact that, at one time, the spirit of sectism crept into the church at Corinth, and threatened its disorganization, but the apostle Paul rushed to the rescue, and drove out the spirit ere it could accomplish its purpose. There were some in that church who were ardent admirers of Paul, others of Apollos, and others still of Cephas, and so the church was being split up into Paulites, Apollosites and Cephasites, but Paul severely rebuked that sectarian spirit, saying unto them: ‘Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed? Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were you baptized into the name of Paul?’ As much as to say:

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‘No, brethren, you were not baptized into my name, but into the name of Christ; therefore it is His name, and not the name of Paul or of Apollos or of Cephas, that you ought to be wearing and glorying in.’

“Oh that some modern Paul might arise and administer unto the church of to-day the rebuke that it deserves for fostering the party spirit by exalting and wearing the names of men, instead of that all-significant name ‘Christian,’ which God has given us to wear in honor of His Son! In the language of Paul, brethren, let me ask in conclusion: Who was John the Baptist? Who was Martin Luther? Who was John Calvin? Who was John Wesley? Who was Alexander Campbell? but simply ministers by whom we were made believers in Jesus Christ. Is Christ divided? Was John the Baptist crucified for us, or were we baptized in the name of John, or Luther, or Calvin, or Wesley, or Campbell? No, we were all baptized into the name of Christ; therefore let us honor Him by wearing His name, and that to the exclusion of all party names, and then shall be removed one of the greatest barriers that stand in the way of union.”

CHAPTER X.

POINTS OF AGREEMENT

AT the close of Mr. Middleton's address the congregation sang a few verses of that old song:

“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word.”

Chairman: “Brethren, having listened to this admirable address of Bro. Middleton and caught through it a glimpse of that grand brotherhood that composed the church in its early history, we are even more anxious than before to have the barriers removed, and ourselves to become component parts of a similar brotherhood. The question, however, may be asked: ‘Can those barriers be removed?’ I think they can. In fact, I believe the barriers that stand in our way are less formidable and less numerous than many suppose who have never given the subject any special thought. In other words, there is more agreement between us than many imagine. We will now listen to an address by Bro. Combs on the subject, ‘Facts Concerning Which We All Agree.’ ”

Mr. Combs: “I desire, first of all, ladies and gentlemen, to congratulate you upon your good fortune in being permitted to listen to Bro. Middleton's admirable

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address. It was certainly full of thoughts worthy of place in your memory.

“I have been asked to address you on the subject, ‘Facts Concerning Which We All Agree.’ Of course, we understand that the facts referred to in the subject are facts concerning the Christian religion, for that is the subject under consideration here this evening.

“The audience before me represents at least five different church organizations. Each of these organizations is supposed to stand for certain doctrinal truths, and the logic of denominationalism is that those truths are of such vital importance that persons believing the truths as taught by one church couldn’t worship God acceptably with those who do not believe them, and hence the demand for separate church-houses in which to worship.

“Now, it is not my purpose this evening to try to show you the inconsistency of denominationalism, nor even to attempt to show you in how many things we must agree in order to be able to worship together harmoniously, but merely to show you the extent of agreement already existing between the several churches of our town, hoping that such a view will create in us that earnest longing for perfect agreement that will nerve us for the task of removing the barriers that stand in the way of our union.

“In the first place, we all believe in God. We are not among those who deny the presence of God in the universe. We do not believe, as some claim to believe, that the heavens above us and the earth beneath us are the result of mere chance. We are one in

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our acceptance of that statement of Holy Writ which declares that 'in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'

"But we not only agree in our belief of the existence of God, but we agree also as to the various attributes of His nature and character.

"We believe that God is all-powerful. We can not believe that a world like this one upon which we live, to say nothing of the tens of thousands of others, could have been brought into existence by a being possessed only of limited power. Hence, beholding the wonderful works of God, we are all one in ascribing unto Him unlimited power.

"But we not only ascribe unto Him unlimited power, but unlimited wisdom as well. We look out upon the great system of worlds, and see them moving about in their respective orbits, some in one direction and some in another; some apparently crossing the pathway of its neighboring planet, yet never colliding, never interfering, but each completing its orbit with such marked regularity that our astronomers are able to tell, years in advance, just when an eclipse will occur; and this wonderful regularity in the movement of the various planets has led us to the common belief that the being who controls them is a being of unlimited wisdom.

"But we not only ascribe unto God unlimited power and wisdom, but we ascribe unto Him also the attributes of love, mercy and compassion. Our belief, however, in these attributes of the Deity isn't based upon the same evidence that our belief in His power and

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wisdom is based upon. Nature has taught us the power and wisdom of God, but nature doesn't teach us the love, mercy and compassion of God. There are, I admit, some things in nature that would seem to indicate that the God of nature was possessed of these attributes, but other things seem to contradict it. The warm sunshine and gentle showers of the springtime nurture into life the tiny seeds which the farmer sows, and, as he sees the plants expanding and giving promise of an abundant harvest, he is wont to believe that the God of nature is possessed of the attributes of love, mercy and compassion. But when, just before the harvest-time, nature gathers together the winds from the four quarters of the earth, compresses them into bombs of cyclonic fury and sends them sweeping across his fields, leaving only wreckage and ruin behind, that farmer finds it rather difficult to believe that the God of nature is possessed of the attributes of love, mercy and compassion. Indeed, every one who relies altogether upon the works of nature for their evidence of the love and mercy of God will often find occasion to doubt.

“For this evidence we must turn to the Bible, and this, friends, leads me to speak of another fact which we all believe in common; viz., that the Bible is an inspired book; that it came from God, and contains a record of God's dealing with man for a period of more than four thousand years. There is no difference between us here. We all believe alike with respect to the origin of the Book.

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“Accepting then, as we do, the Bible as a book inspired of God, we naturally believe in common a great many things that are taught therein.

“We believe the Bible record of the creation of man; his sojourn in the Garden of Eden; his temptation and fall; his expulsion from the Garden; his separation from the tree of life, and consequent death.

“We believe the record of Cain and Abel, and of the world growing more and more corrupt, until all, save Noah and his family, were destroyed in the waters of a great flood which God brought upon the earth.

“We believe that from the descendants of Noah the earth was repopled, and that, in the process of time, fearing another flood, they conceived the idea of building a great tower as a means of escape from such a calamity, which work resulted in the confusion of tongues and the dispersion of the people into various lands.

“We believe the Bible record of God’s call to Abraham to become the father of the Israelitish nation; of that nation’s sojourn and oppression in the land of Egypt; of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage by the hand of Moses, the servant of the Lord, and of their subsequent settlement in the land of Canaan.

“We believe that the nation which sprang from the loins of Abraham was intended to be a peculiar treasure unto the Lord, the object of His especial love and care, and that, through it, He promised a great blessing to all the world.

“We believe that promise was fulfilled when Christ, the promised seed of Abraham, came, and, by His

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death upon the cross, slew the enmity that existed between the Jew and Gentile. As Paul says: 'Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.' Hence we all believe in the divine mission of Christ: that He was the Son, and sent of God, for the purpose of effecting a reconciliation between rebellious man and his God.

"We believe that Christ, in order to accomplish His work of reconciliation, inaugurated upon earth an institution known in New Testament history as His 'church' or 'kingdom.' We believe also that the purpose of Christ in establishing this institution was that rebellious men might become members thereof, and, by conforming their lives to the laws of His kingdom, might develop in this life those characteristics that would enable them to live in peace with God in the world to come.

"We believe also that Christ, as the mediator between God and man, had the right, the power plenary, to dictate to rebellious men the terms of their reconciliation with God. We believe also that the terms of reconciliation, as announced to the world by Christ and His inspired apostles, have been ratified at the court of heaven, and that, in harmony with those terms, God now requires every alien sinner, in order to his reconciliation, to believe in His Son Jesus Christ, and submit themselves to His authority.

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“We all believe, then, that faith in Christ is the foundation of the sinner’s hope.

“We all believe that God requires every believer in Christ to repent, lay down his arms of rebellion, and swear eternal allegiance unto Christ.

“We all believe that God requires every penitent believer in Christ to be baptized.

“We all believe that God requires every baptized, penitent believer to live a sober, moral and righteous life here on earth; to ‘add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.’ To such as these, we all believe, God has promised ‘an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’

“Such, my friends, are some of the facts concerning which, I am persuaded, we all agree. These facts are fundamental. They constitute the basis upon which rests the whole scheme of human redemption; and, in view of our agreement upon these fundamental facts concerning the Christian religion, I submit to you, my brethren, whether our disagreement over things of minor importance doesn’t seem a little childish and inconsistent, to say the least of it, and whether, in your estimation, it isn’t our plain duty before God to look these minor differences squarely in the face, and, if possible, remove them.”

Chairman: “In reply to Bro. Combs’ closing remark, I wish to say that I firmly believe it to be our duty ‘to look these minor differences squarely in the face, and, if possible, remove them.’ However, as it

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is now ten o'clock I think it better we defer that matter to another evening, either to-morrow evening or to some evening next week, as you may think best."

Mr. Sims: "Mr. Chairman, I am in favor of continuing these meetings each evening, and from week to week, if necessary, in order to bring about the desired results. I therefore move you that we meet again to-morrow evening, and, if necessary, the evening following."

The motion, duly seconded, was submitted to the audience and carried.

Chairman: "You are all aware, brethren, that we are engaged in a work that is new to us all. Never before, perhaps, have any of us taken part in the work of trying to reconcile the differences between churches, and bring about a state of union; and I, for one, feel the need of help. As chairman of the meeting, I perhaps feel a greater weight of responsibility than I would otherwise, and I crave your counsel and your prayers.

"To-morrow morning, at nine o'clock, a few of the brethren will meet at the home of Bro. Sims for the purpose of outlining a course of procedure for to-morrow evening's meeting, and I shall be pleased to have any of you meet with us who feel that you could offer any suggestion that would help us in our work. I especially invite the pastors to meet with us.

"Now, unless some one desires to speak a word or ask a question, we are ready for the adjournment until to-morrow evening."

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After waiting a few moments, Bro. Powell, pastor of the Brethren Church, was asked to pronounce the benediction.

After the audience had been dismissed, Messrs. Middleton and Combs were the recipients of many hearty congratulations because of their magnificent addresses. Even Mr. Potter admitted that he thought them both very good indeed.

CHAPTER XI.

FEELING THE SENTIMENT OF THE AUDIENCE

AT the appointed hour on Thursday evening an even larger audience than on the preceding evening assembled at the amphitheater. Bro. Birch had been notified by phone that the meeting would be continued, and he, too, was there.

The opening service was led by Bro. Logan, pastor of the Presbyterian Church. After singing the old song beginning

“My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,”

he read the Lord's Prayer, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. After which Bro. Clark was asked to lead the congregation in prayer, which he did in a most effective manner.

When the devotional service had ended, the chairman stepped to the front, and said: “Brethren, according to the program as arranged at the forenoon meeting, the first question to be settled this evening is whether or not the people desire a union of churches. It would certainly be folly for us to try to bring about a state of union between the several churches of our town if the people who compose those churches do not desire it. If, after investigation, it is found that all,

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or even a majority, of the people are satisfied with present conditions, I suppose that further efforts at union would be useless. Under those conditions we had as well pronounce the benediction and return to our homes. My candid opinion is, however, there are a great many persons here who are not satisfied with present conditions, and who desire something better. Just how many there are, of course, we do not know, nor can we know until we in some way put the matter to a test. However, before attempting to find out how the audience as a whole stands upon the subject of union, it was the sense of the program committee that some time be given for an exchange of ideas as to the desirability or non-desirability of union; so, for half an hour, or longer, if necessary, the meeting will be open to any and all who desire to express their ideas as to the desirability or non-desirability of organic union."

The first to respond to this invitation was Bro. Mason, who spoke as follows:

"I want to say, Mr. Chairman, and I had just as well say it first as last, that I am unalterably opposed to union, as contemplated in this meeting. I oppose it for two reasons: First, because Christ, while He was here on earth, spake a parable concerning the vine and its branches, which, to my mind, is proof conclusive that He foresaw the present condition of His church. In that parable Christ saw His church as composed of one central stem, or organization, with numerous others appended thereto as branches—a correct picture of the church as it exists in the world to-day. For, if you

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will allow it, there is, and ever has been, one grand central organization of the church of Christ, and I have the honor of belonging to that organization. It is the Baptist Church, the only one in existence whose history can be traced in unbroken succession back to the apostles; and I think we have no right to sever from the main vine any of the branches that have sprung therefrom, for Christ says: 'The Father, who is the husbandman, has reserved unto himself the right to sever from the vine all fruitless branches.'

"In the second place, I oppose this union because of the deteriorating effect it would have upon the church as an organization. If it were possible, and all churches were united into one organization, it wouldn't be a half-century until it became as corrupt as the church was during the reign of Catholicism; and the great mystery to me is why men with the history of that corruption before their eyes should be courting a repetition of it by bringing the church back into the same condition it was then. Are you not aware, brethren, that the rivalry which exists between the several churches tends to keep them pure? Destroy that rivalry by uniting all the churches into one, and there is no power on earth that can prevent that church becoming corrupt."

"Mr. Chairman, with Bro. Mason's consent, I desire to ask him a question," said Mr. Middleton.

"You have my consent, if your question is a civil one," Bro. Mason replied.

"I assure you, Bro. Mason, I have no disposition upon an occasion like this to ask any other kind, and

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sincerely trust that no one during this discussion will feel himself licensed to do so. I am aware of the fact that occasions like this furnish persons, inclined that way, an excellent opportunity for repartee, but I trust that no one during this meeting, or meetings, as the case may be, will avail himself of the opportunity which the occasion affords for indulging in that kind of argument, for repartee isn't logic, and what we want in these discussions is not wit, but logic and sound reasoning."

"Amen," exclaimed a voice from the center of the audience, and Mr. Middleton, recognizing it as coming from Bro. Clark, said: "God bless these Methodist folks! They have a way of letting people know when anything suits them, and I hope they will bring that custom with them into the united church, and inoculate the whole body."

"Now, Bro. Mason, you have pointed out to us two reasons why you oppose the union we are seeking to bring about. May I ask if these are the only reasons which you have for opposing it?"

"Well, I think of no others just now; but these I consider quite sufficient to justify me opposing it."

"If these, then, are your only reasons for opposing the union, suppose that, in some way, you should become convinced that your reasons were not valid, would you still oppose it?"

"How could I, and be an honest man? I want you to understand, Bro. Middleton, that I claim to be an honest man, and that it is because of conscientious convictions that I oppose this union; but if you, or

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any one else, were to convince me that the reasons I have offered are not valid ones, and that denöminationalism is wrong and organic union right, I would certainly espouse the cause of union and both labor and pray for it."

"I would not have you infer from anything I have said, Bro. Mason, that I consider you otherwise than honest. However, I appreciate the candid statement which my question has called forth from your lips, and rejoice to know that you are open to conviction. Permit me, then, to say, in the spirit of Christian courtesy, that, in my estimation, you have misconstrued the meaning of Christ's parable of the vine and its branches. You say that when Christ spake that parable, He foresaw the present condition of the church; that it should be composed of one main stem or vine, with numerous others appended as branches, and that the main vine represents the Baptist Church, while the branches represent the different denominations; but remember, Bro. Mason, Christ nowhere says that the vine represents the Baptist Church or that its branches represent the different denominations. That is simply *your* application of the parable. Christ says: 'I am the vine, and ye are the branches.' Instead, then, of Christ attempting to portray some future state of the church, He was describing to His disciples the relationship which they sustained to Him even then, for He says: 'Ye *are* the branches.' Whatever Christ meant to be the branches *were* the branches even then, and, as there were no denominations in existence at that time, it seems to me, Bro. Mason, that sound

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reasoning will force us to the conclusion that the branches were individual Christians, and not denominations.”

“I am confident, brethren, that Bro. Middleton’s interpretation of that passage is correct,” said Mr. Clark, as he arose from his seat. “Until recently I, too, was inclined to look upon that passage as justifying denominationalism, but I no longer so regard it. I have also abandoned the idea that denominationalism is necessary in order to preserve the purity of the church. Bro. Mason says: ‘Destroy the rivalry which now exists between the churches, and there is no power on earth that can prevent it becoming corrupt.’ With due deference to your opinion, Bro. Mason, I feel impelled to say that you are mistaken. There is a power on earth that is adequate to preserve the purity of the church and make it the grandest institution ever inaugurated for the benefit of humanity, and that power is found in the Christ spirit of brotherly love so clearly visible in the early church. Let the Christ spirit of brotherly love supplant the spirit of rivalry that now pervades the church, and the same success that attended the preaching of the gospel during the first three centuries will attend it now.”

“I am glad, indeed, Mr. Chairman, to hear Bro. Clark utter these words,” said Bro. Birch, “for I feel that they are as true as the gospel itself. The purity of the church in heaven will be preserved without rivalry, and I see no reason why its purity may not be preserved without it down here. As Bro. Clark says, ‘let the Christ spirit of brotherly love supplant

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the spirit of rivalry that now pervades the church,' and not only its purity, but its aggressiveness also, will be assured."

After waiting a few moments to see whether any one else desired to speak, Mr. Lane, the chairman, arose and said: "I believe you are right, Bro. Birch; the aggressiveness of the church depends upon the love which its individual members possess for each other and for the world at large. We are willing to work, and even sacrifice, for those we love, and I, for one, long to see the spirit of denominational rivalry, upon which the church is now depending for aggressive work, supplanted by the Christ spirit of brotherly love; then, and not until then, will the church accomplish her greatest work. And now, unless some one else desires to speak, we are ready to ascertain the sentiment of the audience with respect to union."

CHAPTER XII.

THE NAME

AT this juncture Mr. Sims arose and said: "Mr. Chairman, in anticipation of such a time as this, I have prepared a resolution, which I ask the privilege of submitting to the audience for their approval or disapproval, as they may elect."

Chairman: "You may read your resolution, Bro. Sims."

Mr. Sims: "WHEREAS, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in order to the accomplishment of His mediatorial work between God and rebellious man, saw fit to establish a church; and

"WHEREAS, During and since the Dark Ages, that church has become divided up into rival sects, occasioning a great deal of bitterness, envy and strife among the people of God, as well as a waste of energy and means that should be spent in evangelizing the world; therefore be it

"*Resolved*, That we, the followers of Christ in the town of Alpha, shall make an honest effort to remove the barriers that hitherto have separated us, and, if possible, unite in one local congregation."

Chairman: "You have heard the resolution offered by Bro. Sims, brethren; what will you do with it?"

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Bro. Clark: "I move its adoption."

Mr. Wade: "I second the motion."

Chairman: "Brethren, a motion has been made and seconded that the resolution be adopted. Are you ready for the question?"

Bro. Mason: "Permit me to say, Mr. Chairman, before the vote is taken, that I am opposed to the resolution. This whole business is nothing but child's play. The resolution speaks of removing the barriers that separate us, but those barriers are immovable. You had as well try to move Gibraltar."

Mr. Drew: "There is an old saying, Bro. Mason, that where there's a will there's a way, and the truthfulness of that saying is becoming more apparent to us as the years come and go. Barriers that seemed impossible a few years ago are no longer so regarded. Since the tunneling of the Alps, the discovery of the North Pole and the mammoth achievement of cutting the American continent in two by means of the Panama Canal, it is improper to speak even of Gibraltar as being immovable, and more improper to speak of the barriers that now separate the people of God as being immovable. What men have builded men can tear down, if they so desire, and I, for one, am heartily in favor of tearing down these denominational walls, at least so far as our own town is concerned."

Mr. Sullivan: "I am fully convinced. Mr. Chairman, that denominationalism is an evil, and should be abolished; I am also convinced that it can not be abolished without an effort. Therefore I am heartily in favor of the resolution, which provides that an

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honest effort be made to remove the barriers that now separate us."

As soon as Mr. Sullivan had finished, a half-dozen voices were heard calling for the question.

Chairman: "As many as favor the adoption of the resolution as read will please make it known by rising to your feet. As many as oppose it will then make it known in the same way."

More than three-fourths of the audience voted in favor of the resolution.

Chairman: "Brethren, by an overwhelming majority you have voted to at least make an effort to remove the barriers that stand in the way of organic Christian union, and not only to make an effort, but an *honest* effort, and that means we are not to quit the field at the first rumble of the enemies' guns, but that we will the rather go our whole length into the fray, even though to do so may necessitate us giving up some things that hitherto have seemed very dear to us. As our Bro. Sullivan remarked a few moments ago, 'we can not hope to succeed in this undertaking without an effort,' and I would add, neither do we hope to succeed without making some sacrifice; but I am persuaded, brethren, that the sacrifices we shall be called upon to make will only involve things of minor importance, when compared with the end to be attained. I venture the assertion that not a single sacrifice will be made but will yield the person making it a rich reward in the consciousness of having done his duty. And now, brethren, the time for heroic action has come. We are to consider the difficulties that lie

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before us, and, if possible, remove them. What is the pleasure of the assembly with reference to the method of procedure?"

Mr. Roberts (Presbyterian): "Mr. Chairman, as a carpenter, I have had considerable experience in the building of houses. I remember upon one occasion building a magnificent dwelling, using in its construction mainly the material contained in several smaller buildings. Our method of procedure upon that occasion was to first tear down the smaller buildings (disorganize them), and then out of the mass of disorganized material we constructed a building, according to the plans furnished us by the architect, that was a credit to the town and an object of admiration to all who beheld it. Practically the same conditions confront us, and I would suggest that we begin by disorganizing the several small churches of our town, and out of the material then at our disposal—in harmony with the divine plan of church construction, as contained in the New Testament Scriptures and submitted to us by the chief Architect Himself—let us go to work and build up a church that will be a credit to the town, an honor to Christ and an object of beauty to all who may behold it."

Bro. Mason: "Permit me to say, Bro. Roberts, that, in my estimation, a great deal of your material would have to be remodeled before it could be worked into a strictly New Testament church."

"That may be true, Bro. Mason, but, so far as I am individually concerned, I am willing to submit to any remodeling process necessary to enable me to fit

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into the New Testament organization. Are you willing to do the same?"

"I claim to belong to a New Testament organization already, and, consequently, no remodeling is at all necessary to enable me to fit into such an one."

"But suppose, when the plans and specifications of the New Testament church are spread out before you, you should find that you were mistaken about your being in perfect accord therewith, would you then be willing to undergo such changes as would be necessary to bring you into harmony with it or no?"

"I suppose under such circumstances I would, but—"

"Just leave off the 'but'; all we care to know is that you recognize the authority of the New Testament plan of church organization, and are willing to conform thereto."

Bro. Logan: "Mr. Chairman, I think Bro. Roberts' suggestion to disorganize our several local congregations in order that we may use the material contained in them to build up the one organization we have in mind a good one, but it seems to me we are not yet quite ready to begin the new organization, nor to tear down the old ones. I presume that before Bro. Roberts even began to tear down those smaller buildings plans and specifications for the new one had been considered and approved by the parties interested. So, before we tear down the old, I would suggest that the plans and specifications of the new organization be fully discussed and approved."

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Bro. Birch: "I heartily approve Bro. Logan's suggestion. Before disorganizing the old churches, let us have a clear understanding as to just what the new one is to be in name, doctrine and practice; and, in order to get the matter before us in definite form, I move you, Mr. Chairman, that we proceed to discuss the subject under these several heads, with the understanding that the new organization shall conform in name, doctrine and practice to the apostolic church, as that church has been portrayed to us in the New Testament Scriptures."

The motion, duly seconded, was submitted to the congregation, and carried enthusiastically and by a very large majority.

Chairman: "Now, brethren, in harmony with the motion just adopted, the first question we are to consider with reference to our union is that of name. What is the pleasure of the audience with reference to this important question?"

Mr. Middleton: "Permit me, Mr. Chairman, to say a few words right here. You speak of the question before us as an important one, and indeed it is. As I see it, there are but few things, if any, that stand more in the way of the union of God's people than these separate names which they are wearing, and I sincerely trust we will approach the subject with a due sense of its importance, and leave nothing undone that is necessary to enable us to settle it aright. For, with this question properly settled, one of the greatest barriers that stand in the way of our union will then have been removed."

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Mr. Sims: "Mr. Chairman, while I agree with Bro. Middleton as to the importance of the question now before us, yet it does seem to me that, of all the questions likely to come before us for settlement, this one of *name* should be the least difficult, whether it be as to the name we should wear as individuals or as a church. As individuals, what name could be more appropriate than the name 'Christian'? As a church, what more appropriate than the name 'Church of Christ'? I therefore move you, Mr. Chairman, that, in the event we decide to have only one church in the town, it be known to the world as the 'Church of Christ' at Alpha, and its individual members as 'Christians.' "

Mr. Watson: "I rise, Mr. Chairman, to offer a second to the motion."

Chairman: "You have heard the motion, brethren; are you ready for the question?"

Bro. Mason: "As pastor of the Baptist Church, I feel it my duty to speak a word of warning to my brethren. As a church, we are known to the world as 'Baptists,' and, as Baptists, we sustain a peculiar relationship to the great Baptist brotherhood of the world. What belongs to that brotherhood belongs in part to us. We have an interest in the varied institutions of that brotherhood, both in the home and in the foreign field. The orphanages, hospitals, churches, schools and colleges are ours by virtue of our being Baptists. Cease to be Baptists and we lose all interest in these institutions.

"Besides, as a Baptist church, we are a part of the 'Oak Grove Association,' but that relationship will

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be severed whenever we cease to be a Baptist church. With these results staring us in the face, certainly no Baptist will vote for the motion now before the house.

“As I see it, the question of name is not one of very great importance, anyway; and, seeing the inconvenience and loss that would accrue to us by abandoning our church name, it seems to me that, in deference to us, you people should all agree to accept the name ‘Baptist.’ ”

Bro. Clark: “The last speaker, Mr. Chairman, needs to be reminded that the very terms of agreement already adopted by this body forever preclude any possibility of us adopting the name ‘Baptist.’ According to agreement, the united church is to conform to the apostolic church in name, doctrine and practice, as that church has been portrayed to us in the New Testament; and, unless Bro. Mason can furnish some New Testament authority for the name he suggests, he had as well abandon his hopes.”

Bro. Mason: “I could as easily find New Testament authority for the name ‘Baptist’ as you could for the name ‘Methodist Episcopal.’ ”

Bro. Clark: “I am fully aware of that fact, Bro. Mason, and for that reason I have never entertained any hope of our united church being a Methodist Episcopal. If we are to conform strictly to the New Testament in the matter of selecting a name for the church, I am persuaded all of us will have to give up our pet names; even our brethren who claim to be ‘Christians only’ will have to make some concessions, for I think they, too, will fail when they go to search-

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ing the New Testament for authority for the name 'Christian Church.' "

Bro. Birch: "We will gladly yield that name, Bro. Clark, for one that more fully accords with the New Testament Scriptures."

Bro. Powell: "I see, brethren, that it will be useless for me to try to effect a compromise by offering you our church name; for, while the name 'Brethren' is frequently applied to the followers of Christ in the New Testament, yet I fail to call to mind a single passage where the term 'Brethren Church' is used therein; and since in name our new organization is to conform to the teaching of the New Testament, it will be necessary for us to change our church name if we are to enter into this union. I think, however, if other matters can be satisfactorily adjusted, my brethren will willingly concede to the change."

Bro. Logan: "Our church is known as the Presbyterian Church. We have that name chiseled on the front of our church building. We have no Scripture for it, but I have read the New Testament from beginning to end and I have never yet come across the name 'Church of Christ,' and, if we are to adopt that name, we would still have one without Scripture authority."

Mr. Middleton: "Technically, Bro. Logan is right, Mr. Chairman, but logically he is wrong. While the term 'Church of Christ' (singular form) is not found in the New Testament, yet the logical conclusion we would reach in reading it is that there is a certain institution described therein which the apostles recog-

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nized as the 'Church of Christ.' For instance, in Matthew 16, shortly before the close of His public ministry, we hear Christ saying: 'Upon this rock I will build my church.' From this it is evident that Christ purposed building a church, and that church when built would be *His* church. Was that church ever built? It certainly was, for over in the fifth chapter of Acts, Luke, after describing a certain event that had transpired, said that 'great fear came upon all the church.' What church? Evidently the church that Christ said He was going to build, and which was built—formally established in the city of Jerusalem—and concerning which Luke says: 'The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.' Thus we find there was a church established in the city of Jerusalem, and that Christ recognized it as *His* church.

"But the church of Christ was not to be confined to Jerusalem; its mission was to be world-wide. It was not only to be a savor of life unto the Jews, but to the Gentiles as well. Hence, in the process of time, we find the disciples and apostles leaving Jerusalem, going out in every direction preaching the gospel, and multitudes, both of Jews and Gentiles, became obedient unto the faith. The gospel, however, required that these new converts should meet together at stated times for spiritual edification. It would not be possible for them to come up to Jerusalem every week; hence we find the apostles establishing churches in many of the towns and communities surrounding. It is worthy to be noted, however, that these were not different denominations, wearing different names and teaching

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different doctrines. They were simply local churches established at these different places for the convenience of the people in the matter of worship. In doctrine and practice they were all alike, and all wore a common name—‘churches of Christ’ or ‘of God.’ These two names are equivalent, and were used interchangeably by the apostles, for the reason that, in the work of reconciliation, the apostles recognized God and Christ as one. Hence we read that ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,’ and the church, being a necessary agency in accomplishing this work, was considered by the apostles the common property of both, and sometimes referred to local congregations as churches of God and sometimes as churches of Christ. In 2 Cor. 1:1, Paul refers to that particular local congregation as ‘the church of God at Corinth,’ but in Rom. 16:16 the same apostle groups all these local congregations, and refers to them as ‘churches of Christ.’

“I maintain, then, Bro. Logan, that we would be logically within the bounds of New Testament teaching to call our church either the ‘Church of Christ’ or the ‘Church of God,’ qualified, of course, by having the name of the town attached, as suggested by Bro. Sims in the motion. It would certainly be the height of bigotry for us to call ours either the ‘Church of Christ’ or ‘Church of God’ in an unqualified sense; for either term, when used in that sense, includes all who through faith in Christ and obedience to His gospel are trusting Him for life and salvation, and certainly we can never hope to have all of God’s

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people who inhabit the earth to be enrolled as members of our one local congregation. But to call it the 'Church of Christ at Alpha' will be honoring Christ, and, at the same time, recognizing the fact that God has a people other than those who compose that one local congregation."

As soon as Mr. Middleton had taken his seat, several voices were heard calling for the question, and when the vote was taken, it was found that a very large majority had voted in favor of the motion.

Chairman: "Brethren, by your vote you have decided, in case we succeed in effecting a union between the several churches of our town, that the united church shall be known to the world as 'The Church of Christ at Alpha,' and its individual members as 'Christians.' I would now suggest, because of the lateness of the hour, that we adjourn to meet again tomorrow evening, according to the motion adopted at our last meeting."

A motion to that effect was offered and carried, after which Bro. Birch pronounced the benediction.

CHAPTER XIII.

DISCOVERING THE FOUNDATION

AT the appointed hour on Friday evening an eager throng had assembled at the amphitheater. It was generally understood that the subject of "Doctrinal Differences" was to be discussed at this meeting, and both excitement and curiosity were strongly in evidence. Some had expressed the opinion that this meeting would be the "Waterloo" where the unionists would go down to defeat. Others were more optimistic, and argued that the union sentiment was strong enough to enable them to amicably settle all their differences.

After the usual preliminaries, the chairman announced that at a conference held at the home of Bro. Sims in the forenoon, several of the brethren being present, a program was arranged for the evening meeting, and that, according to the program, Bro. Birch would now deliver a brief address.

Bro. Birch spoke, in part, as follows: "Brethren and sisters, through the mercy of an all-wise God, we have been spared to this hour, and are now to be accorded the exalted privilege of participating in a service than which, perhaps, a more important one has never been held within the limits of our town.

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Important because of its bearing upon the peace, happiness and welfare of the people of God.

“We are entering upon this service as Christians, persons who love God and the Christ whom He hath ordained to be the Saviour of men; yet it can not be denied that there is a lack of fellowship among us, occasioned by the party spirit which has crept into the church and divided it up into rival sects.

“To remove the cause of these divisions, and restore to the church the fellowship of the apostolic age, is the object of our meeting this evening; and right here let me say, brethren, that the barriers which separate us are less real than many of us imagine them to be. The idea has become instilled into the minds of a great many that the barriers which separate us are made up entirely of doctrinal differences, so fundamental in their nature that a person of one communion couldn't fellowship those of another without committing sin.

“As opposed to this idea, let me say—and I feel I have the word of God to back me in the statement—that there is one, and only one, doctrinal truth taught in the New Testament clothed with authority to admit or deny any one to the fellowship of the church of Jesus Christ, and that is the doctrinal truth taught therein concerning His divinity. Whoever accepts that truth, with all that its acceptance implies, has a God-given right to the love, confidence and fellowship of every other individual who has accepted it, and no man nor set of men have any right to interpose a set of rules that would deprive him of that right.

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“This I hold to be the great fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion. It is the foundation upon which the whole superstructure rests. ‘Upon this rock I will build my church,’ declared Christ, ‘and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.’ Upon that rock it was built, and there it has ever stood, unshaken by the assaults of wicked and designing men. Infidelity has been trying for ages to tear the church down; but infidels themselves pass away, while the church still remains, and why? Simply because they have never been able to disprove, to the satisfaction of the human mind, the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was the divine Son of God. Should infidelity succeed in disproving that fact, the church would crumble into nothingness; but as long as that truth remains intact in the human mind the church will stand, and all the powers of earth and hell combined can not prevent it.

“Friend, do you believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God and Saviour of men? If yes, then I declare unto you, upon the authority of the written word of God, that you have the exalted privilege of becoming a child of God and heir of eternal life, for it is written: ‘As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name.’ Can you not see, my friends, where God has placed the test of fellowship in His church? It is right here in vital connection with this fundamental truth concerning the divinity of Christ. Believe it, and you are eligible to citizenship in His kingdom; disbelieve it, and you are not.

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“The apostles and early Christians all understood the relationship of this truth to the kingdom of Christ, and demanded of every one a confession of their faith in the Son of God as a prerequisite to baptism and fellowship in the church. ‘See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?’ said the eunuch, after Philip had preached unto him Christ, and Philip said: ‘If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.’ ‘And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,’ and upon that confession Philip baptized him.

“Friends, we are here to-night, many of us sick and tired of denominationalism, with its consequent bitterness, enmity and strife; we would gladly see it driven from our midst, never again to breathe its poisonous breath within the limits of our beloved city nor in the community surrounding. Many of you have been praying long and earnestly for the end of sectarian warfare and for the unity, peace and perfect fellowship of the people of God. But do you know, friends, that the fellowship for which you have been praying is even now within your grasp, that you have but to ‘reach forth to it and it is yours’? You have been praying God to remove the mountains of difficulties which stand in the way of union, when, in reality, there are no mountains to be removed. I declare unto you my conviction, brethren, that there is but one single proposition to which, if the people will but subscribe, union will follow as a logical and inevitable result, and that proposition is the fact that ‘Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.’

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“But you say: ‘We have subscribed to that fact already. We all believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’

“I grant it, my friends, that, in a certain way, we do all believe it; but I call your attention to the fact that, in a certain way, a great many persons believe it who are living in the world, making no pretensions to being Christians; I also call your attention to the fact that, in a certain way, even devils believe it. But the way the devils believe it and the way the people of the world believe it is not the way God expects the Christian to believe it. Philip said to the eunuch: ‘If thou believest *with all thine heart*, thou mayest’ (be baptized). The Christian is expected to believe that fact with *all* his heart. In order that we better understand the difference between merely believing this fact and believing it with all one’s heart, it is necessary that we define the term ‘heart,’ and see what is contained therein.

“Greenfield says: ‘The heart is the mind.’ Whether that definition be true other than in a Bible sense, I shall not attempt to argue; but that the Bible heart and mind are so closely related as to render them incapable of absolute separation is a fact I affirm and stand ready to prove with unanswerable evidence. In fact, the two words are used in the Bible interchangeably. For instance, near the close of his reign, David said, addressing himself to Solomon, who was to succeed him as king over the tribes of Israel, ‘My son, as for me, it was in my *mind* to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God;’ but at the time of

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dedicating the temple, Solomon, referring to the matter, said: 'It was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.' Thus we find that what David said was in his mind, Solomon said was in his heart. If this doesn't prove the Bible heart and mind to be one and the same thing, it certainly proves them to be very closely related. And the closeness of their relationship becomes even more apparent in the light of other passages of Scripture; for instance, this: 'Lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should turn, and I should heal them.' Here the faculty of understanding or reason is ascribed to the heart. Again, 'The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart' (1 Tim. 1:5). 'So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel' (2 Sam. 15:6). From these we learn that love and affection are faculties of the Bible heart. 'Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat' (Dan. 1:8). Here we learn that purpose or will is a faculty of the Bible heart.

"Since, then, the term 'heart,' as used in the Bible, embraces the understanding, reason, love, affection, purpose and will of man, you can readily see that to believe on Christ with *all* the heart means infinitely more than a mere assent of the mind to the fact that He is the Son of God. To merely assent to this fact, as do the devils and people of the world, who are living in rebellion against God, is to use only a part of what the Bible describes as the heart; viz., that

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part which has to do with the understanding and reason. The Christian, however, is expected to believe this fact with all his heart, not only with that part of the heart which has to do with the understanding and reason, but with those parts which have to do with his love and affection, his purpose and will.

“My friends, can you not see at a glance what mighty revolutionary power is contained in the confession which God requires every sinner to make as a prerequisite to baptism and membership in His church? Is there one here to-night ever guilty of declaring that confession insufficient? If so, I pray you consider well what such a confession means, and never again be guilty of making such a charge.

“When a person makes that confession as God intended it to be made, he practically says to the world: ‘I have examined the testimony God has given concerning Jesus of Nazareth, and, in the light of that testimony, I receive Him as the divine Son of God and Saviour of men, the divinely appointed lawgiver of the Christian dispensation, and I here and now, in the presence of God and men, surrender unto Him all that I have and am, including the love and affection of my heart, and henceforth my aim and purpose in life shall be to honor, serve and obey Him in accordance with His divine will.’

“My friends, can anything that mortal man may devise as a prerequisite to baptism, and through baptism to fellowship in the church, be more revolutionary in its effect upon the life and character of an individual than the confession of this fundamental truth

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of the Christian religion when that confession is made from the depths of an honest and sincere heart?

“Or could any confession of faith or articles of agreement that mortal man might devise be more effective as a bond of union between the people of God than the whole-hearted acceptance by each individual of this fundamental truth? It is not only sufficient as a bond of union between individual Christians, but it is sufficient also as a bond of union between the several churches. Were I asked to formulate a statement or to draw up articles of agreement to be submitted to the members of these several churches for their acceptance in order to bring about that state of union we have in mind, that statement would consist of but one single proposition; viz., that ‘Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God,’ and, in the language of Philip to the eunuch, I would say to every church seeking fellowship in that union: ‘If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.’

“Brethren, I commend unto you this fundamental truth of the Christian religion as the basis of our union, and declare unto you my conviction that it is the only basis upon which such a union can be successfully consummated.”

For several moments the audience sat rapt and in profound silence. Even the chairman, with bowed head, seemed apparently oblivious to his surroundings. The reverent, thoughtful atmosphere held all in silence, until a voice from the audience began to sing,

“All hail the power of Jesus’ name,
Let angels prostrate fall,”

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and the whole audience caught up the strain and continued:

“Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.

“Let every kindred, every tribe,
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him Lord of all.”

When the singing had ceased, the chairman arose and said: “Brethren, I know not what thoughts have come into your mind since our brother ended his remarks, but, as for me, I have had a vision, and in that vision I saw a magnificent structure standing in the midst of our town. It was the church home of our people. In workmanship, material and architecture it excelled every other structure, for the people had said, ‘It is the Lord’s house, and must be second to none.’ I saw in my vision the people coming up to worship; from every quarter of our town, and from the country surrounding, they came, a great concourse of people, all animated by the same spirit, all breathing the same prayer, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ It was a real soul feast I was enjoying as I sat here with bowed head, until the song we just sang broke into my reverie, and I awoke to find myself indeed in the presence of a great audience, but assembled in open air, because we haven’t a church-house in town large enough to accommodate the audience. But I am persuaded, brethren, that these conditions are not to continue long; indeed, since listening to Bro. Birch’s address, I see no reason why the union we have in mind may not be consummated at once.

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Certainly no one can object to the basis; still, it may be possible that some are unable to see how the wholehearted acceptance of this single proposition will enable us to dwell together in unity; if so, according to the program previously arranged, the meeting will now be thrown open for a full and free discussion of the subject."

CHAPTER XIV.

REMOVING THE BARRIERS

BRO. LOGAN: "Mr. Chairman, I am free to admit that, since listening to Bro. Birch, my vision of the scope and meaning of the good confession has been greatly enlarged; yet I am unable to see how the acceptance of that proposition is going to remove all the barriers which stand in the way of our union. For instance, the barrier growing out of our several modes of baptism; viz., immersion, trine immersion, sprinkling and pouring. I would be pleased, Mr. Chairman, to have Bro. Birch explain to the audience how even a whole-hearted acceptance of that proposition is going to remove that barrier."

"I assure you, brethren, it is not my pleasure to monopolize all the time during this evening service, but since Bro. Logan has called on me, I feel impelled to respond.

"The question before us is: 'How will the whole-hearted acceptance of the truth that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," remove the barrier growing out of the several modes of baptism?' I answer, my friends, that the whole-hearted acceptance of that truth will compel every one of us to look to Christ and His chosen agents (the apostles)

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for all our authority upon the subject of baptism, as well as upon every other subject pertaining to the Christian religion. It will compel us to heed the admonition that God gave upon the mount of transfiguration, when He said: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; *hear ye him.*' In short, the whole-hearted acceptance of this truth will compel us to draw a line between the inspired word of God and the uninspired writings of men, and will cause us to cleave to the one as being of all authority unto us, and to reject the other as being of no authority whatever. And think you, my friends, that the recognition of the word of God as our sole authority upon this subject will not enable us to settle it? I tell you, it will.

"Whence came all this babble and confusion over the subject of Christian baptism? From the teaching and practice of Christ and His apostles, or from the teaching and practice of men? Evidently from men hath it come. There is nothing in the teaching and practice of Christ and His apostles to have caused such confusion. With them there was 'one Lord, one faith and one baptism,' and that 'one baptism' has been so clearly defined for us in the teaching and practice of Christ and His apostles that there can be but little, if any, room for doubt as to just what it is and how it is to be performed, when we rely altogether for our authority upon the word of God; but when we turn away from the inspired Word and give heed to the 'commandments and traditions of men,' then it is that confusion begins to reign.

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“Notice, my friends, some of the plain utterances of God’s word on the subject of baptism.

“ ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved’ (Mark 16:15, 16).

“ ‘See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest’ (Acts 8:36, 37).

“From this commission of Christ to His apostles and from the practice of an inspired evangelist, we learn that the one baptism of the New Testament was intended for believers only.

“ ‘Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him’ (Matt. 3:13).

“ ‘And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water’ (Acts 8:36).

“From these passages we learn that persons desiring to be baptized went to the water.

“ ‘And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch’ (Acts 8:38).

“Thus the Word teaches that both the candidate and the administrator went down into the water.

“ ‘Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life’ (Rom. 6:4).

“ ‘Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead’ (Col. 2:12).

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“Brethren, the Word teaches that baptism is a burial and a resurrection.

“ ‘And when they were come up out of the water’ (Acts 8:39):

“ ‘And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water’ (Matt. 3:16).

“The Word teaches that after they were baptized they came up out of the water.

“ ‘The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us’ (1 Pet. 3:21).

“The Word teaches that baptism is in some way connected with our salvation.

“ ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost’ (Acts 2:38).

“The inspired Word says baptism is for, or unto, the remission of sins.

“Such, my friends, are some of the utterances of God’s word on the subject of baptism. These utterances are plain and simple; there is nothing ambiguous or uncertain about them; nothing to puzzle or confuse. Indeed, it is only when we turn away from the plain utterances of God’s word and listen to the babblings of men that we become confused. I want you to notice, friends, how every statement of the inspired Word in the texts quoted has been challenged or changed by the teaching and practice of men.

“The Word says, ‘If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest’ (be baptized), but men baptize both believers and non-believers.

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“The Word says persons desiring to be baptized went to the water, but men have adopted the custom of bringing the water to them.

“The Word says, ‘They went down into the water,’ but men say, ‘It isn’t necessary to go down into the water.’

“The Word says, ‘We are buried with Christ by baptism.’ Men say, ‘To moisten the head is sufficient.’

“The Word says, ‘They came up out of the water,’ but in the practice of men (some men) there is no coming up out of the water, for the reason they have not been in it.

“The Word says, ‘The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us,’ but men say, ‘Baptism has nothing to do with our salvation; that men are saved before they are baptized and baptized because they are saved.’

“The Word says, ‘Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins,’ but men say, ‘We are not baptized *for* the remission of sins, but *because* of remission.’

“Thus you see how uninspired men have set at naught the teaching of the inspired Word. Can you not see, my friends, the source from whence our confusion has come—that it came from the teaching and practice of uninspired men, rather than from the teaching and practice of the inspired apostles?

“You ask me how the whole-hearted acceptance of the proposition that ‘Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God,’ is going to remove the barrier growing out of our several modes of baptism. I answer it will remove it by placing us all under the same authority;

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viz., Christ and His inspired Word. Brethren, when we all take our stand whole-heartedly upon that foundation, then we will cast to the winds the creeds and confessions of faith that have been written by uninspired men, and say to their authors: 'Gentlemen, we no longer recognize these things as containing any authority for us. Henceforth we turn to Christ, and to Him alone, for our authority.' And when we do, union will follow as an inevitable result."

Bro. Logan: "Mr. Chairman, I desire to thank Bro. Birch for his plain, yet courteous, answer to my question. It has enabled me to grasp an entirely new thought with reference to the subject of Christian union. I now see, as never before, the practicability of us uniting and becoming one grand brotherhood. Never before have I seen the way so plain and so simple as now. At the time I thought it rather a rash statement our brother made in his former speech, when he said, 'There is one, and only one, proposition to which if the people of God will but subscribe, union will follow as an inevitable result,' but I am now prepared to accept that statement as true, and I here and now take my stand whole-heartedly upon that proposition. I do it with a full consciousness of the fact that it is going to compel me to abandon some things which I have hitherto practiced largely upon the authority of men, rather than upon the authority of Christ Himself. I confess to you, brethren, that my views upon the subject of Christianity are largely the result of impressions made upon my mind by the reading of certain theological books,

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rather than the result of impressions made by the reading of the word of God itself. But now that I have decided to accept Christ, and Him alone, as my authority, I shall cast to the winds the writings of uninspired men, and turn to the inspired Word itself for all my authority; and since the vision I have had to-night of Christ upon the mount of transfiguration, I think I shall be able to use even the inspired Word more intelligently than heretofore.

“Never before have I been able to grasp the full meaning and significance of those words which God spake, when He said: ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.’ I have read the account of Christ’s transfiguration many times, and even preached about it, but the main thought I had gotten from it was the glory that awaited Christ when He had finished His mission, the lesson becoming more precious to me in contemplation of the thought that some day I should be permitted to share with Him His glory. But the fact that Moses and Elias were there had never appealed to me as having any special significance. The story would have been just as full of meaning to me had Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, or David and Solomon, been there instead of Moses and Elias; but I see now the wisdom of God in calling Moses and Elias there. Moses was the lawgiver of the old covenant; Elias was a representative of the prophets, who, under the old covenant, stood between God and man as special revelators of His will. But at the time of Christ’s transfiguration the old covenant had well-nigh fulfilled

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its mission, and was soon to pass away; a new covenant, established upon better promises, was soon to take its place. Hence the necessity of God calling Moses and Elias there that, in the presence of those Jewish apostles, they might surrender unto Christ their authority, and constitute Him the sole and absolute lawgiver of the Christian dispensation. How full, then, of significance and meaning are the words of God, when He said: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.'

"Friends, as sure as day follows night, the authority has been transferred from Moses and the prophets unto Christ, and it is Christ we are to hear in all things pertaining to the Christian religion. I confess unto you, brethren, to having been guilty in the past of mixing the authority of Moses and the authority of Christ. Many are the times I have rummaged through the law of Moses for proof-texts to justify certain practices of the church to which I belong, rather than to rely on the instructions given by Christ and His apostles; but henceforth my appeal shall be to the new rather than to the old, to Christ rather than to Moses."

CHAPTER XV.

TRINE IMMERSION

BRO. POWELL: "Mr. Chairman, I, too, must confess to having gotten a new vision in the evening's discussion. I see, as never before, the necessity of relying upon a single authority in order to union, and evidently Christ is the authority upon which God intended us to rely; and, since the apostles were the medium through whom Christ has communicated His will unto men, it is evident that the system of truth written by them, under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, is the system of truth that is to govern the citizens of His kingdom here on earth. We know that the early Christians recognized the inspired apostles as their authority, for it is written of them that 'they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine,' and I, for one, am willing to join hands with any people who are willing to renounce all human creeds and confessions of faith and accept the Bible as their rule of faith and practice. Indeed, that is what we as a people claim to do now. Bro. Birch and his people claim to do the same thing, yet there is considerable dissimilarity in our doctrine and our practice, and I would like Bro. Birch to state how these differences are to be reconciled to that extent we can all worship together."

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Bro. Birch: "Will Bro. Powell please state what, in his estimation, are the differences in doctrine and practice which prevent his people worshipping with us?"

"There are several points of difference, but I mention only two of them; viz., baptism and foot-washing."

"It is true, Bro. Powell, there is a difference in our practice in regard to these things, but I do not consider the differences irreconcilable. A strict adherence to the instructions given us by the inspired apostles would, I think, enable us to adjust them satisfactorily."

"Do you think, Bro. Birch, there is any likelihood of you and your people ever abandoning single for trine immersion?"

"While I consider your question a little premature, Bro. Powell, yet it had as well, perhaps, be asked now as later. I answer by saying that I am ready to abandon anything that doesn't harmonize with the teaching of Christ, as His teaching has been elucidated for us by the teaching and practice of His inspired apostles."

"Well, it is very clear to my mind that Christ taught trine immersion, for He said, 'Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,' and if you are going to conform strictly to the teaching of Christ, you, too, will have to teach and practice trine immersion."

"I propose to stand by the teaching of Christ, Bro. Powell, but I shall not allow you nor any other uninspired man nor council of men to interpret for me

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the meaning of His teaching. I said awhile ago that I was willing to abandon anything that didn't harmonize with the teaching of Christ, *as His teaching has been elucidated for us by the teaching and practice of His inspired apostles*. I take it that the apostles, guided as they were by the Divine Spirit, were better prepared to interpret the meaning of Christ's teaching than any one else, and when I go to the record of their teaching and work under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, I fail to find therein anything to indicate that they understood a person had to be immersed once in the name of the Father, once in the name of the Son and once in the name of the Holy Spirit, in order to comply with the demand of Christ to be baptized.

"On the day of Pentecost, after preaching his first gospel sermon, Peter said to those inquiring the way of life: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.'

"Again, Paul came to Ephesus and found certain disciples there—converts of Apollos, who knew only the baptism of John—and, after explaining to them the way of the Lord more perfectly, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. If, as you contend, a person must be immersed once in the name of the Father, once in the name of the Son and once in the name of the Holy Spirit in order to be baptized, then those persons who were immersed only in the name of the Lord Jesus were not Scripturally baptized; but the inspired apostles seemed to think they were, and

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I am inclined to think they knew, for Christ had taught them something of the closeness of the relationship existing between the Father, Son and Spirit.

“Just before His betrayal Jesus told His apostles He was going to leave them. The thought made them sad, and, in order to comfort them, He spake to them very tenderly about His Father’s house and the place He was going to prepare for them, and Philip said unto Him: ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.’ Jesus said unto him: ‘Hast thou been so long time with me, and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also. Knowest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?’ And I suppose, had Philip asked to see the Spirit, Christ, with equal propriety, might have said, ‘He that hath seen me hath seen the Spirit also,’ for the Spirit dwelt in Him ‘without measure.’ Philip didn’t have to look once at God, once at Christ and once at the Holy Spirit in order to behold God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. One look at the Christ was sufficient to reveal unto him the Godhead in all of its fullness, for Paul declares that ‘in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,’ and, judging from the teaching and practice of the apostles, a person doesn’t have to be baptized once in the name of the Father, once in the name of the Son and once in the name of the Holy Spirit in order to have fellowship with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, but one immersion into Christ brings him into vital relationship with, and into possession of, all that is contained in the Godhead.”

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Bro. Powell: "Are you aware, Bro. Birch, that the practice of trine immersion can be traced, through the channels of secular history, back to the first century of the Christian era?"

Bro. Birch: "No, I am not aware, Bro. Powell, that such a thing can be done; but, even if it could, it would be no evidence that Christ and His apostles taught and practiced it. Our Catholic brethren claim to be able to trace an unbroken line of popes back to the apostolic age, but that is no evidence that the Papacy existed by divine authority. I have read R. H. Miller's book, entitled 'The Doctrines of the Brethren,' in which he attempts to trace the practice of trine immersion back to the apostles, but, to my mind, he fails in the attempt. The witness used to connect the practice with the apostolic age is Dionysius, supposed to be the Areopagite of Athens, but I presume, Bro. Powell, you are aware of the fact that the writings attributed to him have been pronounced spurious by the scholarship of the world. Robinson, in his encyclopedia, says: 'The works attributed to him are spurious.' Chambers, in his encyclopedia, declares the same thing, and gives as his reason for so doing the fact that 'the writings contain splendid descriptions of the ceremonies of the Catholic worship, glorification of the priestly hierarchy, panegyrics on the monastic life,' etc. St. Anthony is considered the father of the monastic order connected with the Catholic Church, and yet Anthony wasn't born until A. D. 251. How, then, could Dionysius, who lived and died in the first century, have written

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a description of an order the father of which wasn't born until the middle of the third century? Chambers' Encyclopedia says: 'The style, contents and historic allusion clearly indicate that the author of these writings could not have flourished before the close of the fifth century, and, in fact, the writings first made their appearance in the sixth century.'

"In the face of such evidence as this concerning the spuriousness of the writings attributed to Dionysius, I can not think, Bro. Powell, that Mr. Miller was justifiable in using Dionysius as a witness to connect the practice of trine immersion with the apostolic age.

"But this is not the only instance in which Mr. Miller allowed his zeal to lead him to do a thing of very questionable propriety. Tertullian, who wrote about the beginning of the third century, is another of his witnesses, and, concerning the practice, he quotes Tertullian as saying: 'We are immersed for each name, into each person, not once, but thrice.' Now, I have no desire to question the genuineness of this statement. I suppose Tertullian made it, but you will agree with me, Bro. Powell, I am sure, in this; viz., that when one man attempts to establish a matter upon the testimony of another, he is morally bound to heed all that witness has to say on the subject. This, Mr. Miller has failed to do in this case. He quotes only a part of what Tertullian had to say on the subject. In his history of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Bishop Cox quotes Tertullian as saying: 'When we come to the water, having renounced

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allegiance unto Satan, we are then thrice immersed, making a somewhat ampler pledge than was appointed by Christ in His gospel.' From this it would seem that, while Tertullian admitted persons were thrice immersed in his day, yet he considered it a going beyond the actual requirements of the gospel; in other words, an addition, by man, to the gospel plan.

"Jerome also considered it such. He says: 'Many of the things that are practiced in the church, by tradition, have usurped to themselves the authority of the written Word, such as immersing the face thrice in the bath.'

"So you see, Bro. Powell, the chain with which Mr. Miller attempts to connect the practice with the apostles breaks in twain before it reaches them, and I, for one, don't care to link my faith to a broken chain.

"The facts in the case are, the practice can only be traced with any degree of certainty to the second century. At that time there arose quite a heated controversy over the subject of the 'Trinity,' which culminated in the writing of the 'Nicene Creed' in 324, and its supplement, the 'Nicean Constantinopolitan Creed,' in 381, and it seems very probable, to my mind, that the practice of trine immersion is one of the fruits of that controversy, as its practice can be traced to that period, but not beyond.

"The question that directly concerns us, however, is not whether the practice can be traced back to the apostolic age, but whether or not the apostles themselves taught and practiced it. And, relying solely

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upon the New Testament record of their work, I fail to find anything to indicate that they did either. With them there was 'one Lord, one faith and one baptism,' and there isn't in the New Testament a single baptism the record of which intimates that it was accomplished by a triple action, nor is it anywhere affirmed that the apostles used the words of Christ contained in the commission recorded by Matthew as a *formula* for administering the ordinance. Mark you, Bro. Powell, I am not saying, nor am I attempting to prove, that the apostles didn't use those words as a formula, but, relying solely upon the New Testament record of their work, you couldn't prove they did, to save your life.

"In his 'History of the Christian Religion,' Neander writes as follows: 'The formula of baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, which is cited as the traditional one by Justin Martyr, is, perhaps, not the oldest; but the older is perhaps the shorter formula, which refers only to Christ, to which there is allusion in the New Testament, which Marcion also insists on in his attempt to bring about a restoration of the original gospel, and which, amid the disputes concerning the baptism of heretics, still received special recognition. At all events, this shorter formula contains within it, as must be allowed, all that which in the longer one is but more fully analyzed and unfolded' (Vol. I., p. 310).

"That the apostles entertained the same opinion expressed by Neander in this last sentence seems rather probable. With them to honor the Son was to honor the Father also. To dishonor the Son was

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to dishonor the Father. Hence it is written: 'He that confesseth the Son hath the Father also' (1 John 2:23). No use of two separate confessions in order to honor both the Father and the Son; but the single act of confessing the Son secures to the individual the blessing of both Father and Son.

"But whether the apostles used the longer or the shorter of these formulas, it remains to be proven that they immersed their candidates three times; and, until it is proven, you have no right to make trine immersion a prerequisite to church membership. In the absence of a thus saith the Lord, either in 'expressed command or by approved precedent,' you have no more right to demand that a person be thrice immersed than you have to demand that a father and mother shall have their infant babe baptized. You would question your authority in the case of the latter upon the ground that the New Testament is silent on the question of infant baptism; and yet, if you were asked to put your finger on a single passage of Scripture that clearly authorizes trine immersion, you could not do it to save your life. Of course, you could point out certain passages which, in *your opinion*, authorize it: but the pedobaptists can also point out certain passages which, in *their opinion*, authorize infant baptism, and they have just as much right to insist that others shall conform to their opinion as you have to insist that others shall conform to yours, and neither of you have any rights in the matter. No man, nor set of men, has any right to place a yoke upon the neck of their fellow-men, other than the yoke which God

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Himself has placed there by the plain teaching of His word.

“The Scriptures plainly teach that persons convicted of sin and seeking pardon ‘went to the water,’ and, in company with an administrator, ‘went down into the water,’ were ‘buried with Christ by baptism,’ and raised ‘to walk in newness of life.’ This is not a matter of mere human opinion. It is the plain teaching of God’s word, and, as preachers of the gospel, Bro. Powell, it is your duty and mine to insist that men shall conform to such teaching. But for either of us to refuse a person fellowship in the church because he failed to conform to a certain standard we had erected on mere human opinion is certainly going beyond the bounds of our authority.

“As preachers of the gospel, we have no right to make the way into the church of Christ more difficult than the apostles themselves made it, nor have we any right to make the way easier than they made it.

“When Christ, after His resurrection, breathed upon His apostles and said, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained,’ he evidently did it with a view of vesting them with authority to declare to the world the conditions of pardon and citizenship in His kingdom, soon to be established.

“That the apostles were conscious that such authority had been delegated to them, is evident by the

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promptness with which they responded with instructions when sin-burdened men and women came to them with the question, 'What shall we do?'

"That the people recognized them as authority is evident by the readiness with which they followed their instructions. Not only their instructions relative to becoming members of the church, but also their instructions pertaining to their conduct as Christians, for of them it is written: 'They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine.'

"My friends, I hold up before you to-night, as the great 'Magna Charta' of the kingdom of Christ on earth, the New Testament Scriptures, which contain the record of the ministry of Christ and His chosen apostles—those men whom He entrusted with the authority to teach men the way of life and salvation—and I commend unto you, as a panacea for all the ills of a divided Christendom, the system of doctrine which they have left recorded therein. What they taught, let us teach; what they practiced, let us practice, and the wound of denominationalism will then be healed."

Mr. Sullivan: "Mr. Chairman, I am a member of the church commonly known as the 'Brethren Church.' I am heartily in favor of organic Christian union. Until to-night I was a little skeptical as to our ability to adjust all our differences, but my skepticism has all been banished by a new thought which came to me while listening to Bro. Birch's address. To my mind, the brother uttered a great truth when he said: 'The apostles, guided as they were by the Divine Spirit, are

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better interpreters of the meaning of Christ's utterances than any one else.'

"Never before, Mr. Chairman, had I thought of the apostles as being the interpreters of Christ's utterances for us. But, in reality, isn't that just what Christ meant them to be? Before leaving them He told them He would 'pray the Father, and he would send them another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive. . . . He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.' Evidently, the purpose of Christ in having the Spirit reveal these things to His apostles was that they might make the same known unto others, and thus become the interpreters of Christ's teaching.

"There is a diversity of opinions among us concerning the meaning of some of Christ's utterances. For instance, when He said in His commission to His apostles, 'Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,' and again in His utterance upon the occasion of washing His disciples' feet.

"Some interpret these utterances to mean one thing and some another, but evidently the apostles understood what they meant after that the Holy Spirit had come to illumine their minds, for the promise was: 'He shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.' Whatever commands, then, Christ meant to convey to His apostles by the utterances mentioned were made clear to them by the Divine Spirit, and we may rest assured

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they were executed by them throughout their public ministry.

“To understand, then, what Christ meant when He said ‘baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,’ we have but to examine the record of the apostles’ teaching and practice, for they were the Spirit-guided interpreters of the teachings of Christ for us. If they taught persons should be thrice immersed, let us teach it. If they practiced it, let us practice it. If they taught that the members of Christ’s church should meet together once each year to wash one another’s feet, let us teach it. If they practiced it, let us practice it. In other words, let us recognize the Spirit-filled apostles as the interpreters of Christ’s teaching for us, and, like the disciples of old, let us ‘continue stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine.’ ”

At this juncture a motion was made and carried to adjourn to Monday evening, after which the chairman tendered his thanks to the audience for their patience through the unusually long session, and urged that all make an effort before the next meeting to acquaint themselves as much as possible with the teaching and practice of Christ and His inspired apostles, that, when they came together again, they might know the course they should pursue. The benediction was pronounced by Bro. Clark.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFFUSION

THERE were unusually large audiences at the regular services on Sunday, but nothing transpired worthy of special mention.

Interest in the proposed union was in nowise abated by the two days' interim. The proceedings of the meetings were published in the paper the latter part of the week, and many new faces were seen when the audience assembled on Monday evening.

After a brief season of song and prayer, the chairman announced that they were now ready to take up the work where they left off on Friday evening.

Bro. Logan, the Presbyterian preacher, was the first to speak. His remarks were as follows:

“Mr. Chairman, according to appointment, we are here again to continue the investigation begun last week. Our last session was largely devoted to a discussion of the subject of ‘Trine Immersion.’ Just what concessions, if any, our brethren who practice that mode to the exclusion of all others are going to make, I haven’t been informed, but my object is to call attention to another phase of the baptismal subject that must, in some way, be settled before a union can be effected.

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“As a Presbyterian, I am accustomed to sprinkle my converts, though, in some instances, at the request of the candidate, I have immersed, and, in view of the controversy that has arisen over this subject, it seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that this is the course we should pursue. As I understand it, baptism has to do mainly with the conscience of the individual submitting to it; in fact, the Book says, ‘It is the answer of a good conscience toward God,’ and, that being true, whatever satisfies the conscience is sufficient. Some are satisfied with sprinkling, some with pouring and some with immersion; and, for this reason, I think we should allow the candidates to choose whatever mode they like best, and recognize them all as valid.”

Mr. Middleton: “Bro. Logan, a few weeks ago, in the absence of our pastor, I attended services at your church. At the close of the service you asked for an offering for Foreign Missions. With only the best of motives, my brother, I would like to ask what your object was in taking that offering.”

“My object was to add it to other offerings taken for the same purpose, and send missionaries to foreign countries to preach the gospel to the people there.”

“Are you not aware that those people all have their religions?”

“Yes, but they are false religions, and my object is to teach them the religion of Jesus Christ, the only true religion.”

“But do you not think that the consciences of those people approve the services they are rendering to their gods? And, if so, why do they approve them?”

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“Yes, I believe their consciences approve them, and the reason is they have been taught that way. My object is to correct the false teaching, and thus transform their consciences.”

“You admit, then, that teaching has something to do with one’s conscience?”

“I most certainly do. Conscience is a creature of education.”

“Now, Bro. Logan, I heard you upon one occasion say that, so far as you were concerned, you believed in immersion, and that when you were baptized, you were immersed. May I ask why you preferred immersion in the case of your own baptism.”

“I preferred it because, in my investigation of the subject, the Scriptures seemed to teach it.”

“If, then, you believe the Scriptures teach immersion, why do you not teach it?”

“I do teach it, but not to the exclusion of all other forms. I want to be as liberal and broad as possible.”

“Then I would suggest, my brother, that you have an excellent opportunity for displaying your broadness and liberality in dealing with the heathen in foreign lands. Instead of sending missionaries to try to convert them to the Christian religion, why not just say to them, ‘Now, gentlemen, there are gods many and religions many, just take your choice; whatever religion satisfies your conscience is right to you, and we will recognize it as valid’?”

“That wouldn’t be right. Those people are in error, and should be taught the truth.”

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“You have already admitted that the consciences of those people approve their worship, and now you admit they are in error. Therefore, according to your own logic, a person’s conscience may approve his conduct, while, at the same time, that person is practicing an error. If the people of Africa and other heathen lands can have the approval of their consciences while believing in and practicing error, isn’t it pretty strong evidence that the people of America might have the approval of their consciences while, at the same time, they, too, are practicing error? I think it pretty strong evidence, and, in view of the possibility of one’s conscience approving them in error, do you not think, Bro. Logan, that, in your effort to appear broad and liberal, you are stretching yourself beyond the bounds of safety when you say to your converts, many of whom have never given the subject of Christian baptism a single serious thought in their lives, ‘Now, just take your choice in the matter of your baptism; whatever satisfies your conscience will be all right, and we will recognize it as valid’? Since, as you say, conscience is a creature of education, why not educate it? Why not take your Bible and sit down and read to those converts, without comment, all that it has to say on the subject of baptism and a few passages showing the necessity of obedience, and then, with their minds enlightened by the Word of truth, leave them to settle the matter between themselves and their God? That, in my opinion, would be a safer and saner way.”

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Bro. Birch: "May I ask, Bro. Logan, what per cent. of the people coming to you for baptism requested to be sprinkled, rather than immersed?"

"I presume that fully 95 per cent. of them so requested."

"Are we to understand from that that 95 per cent. of your preaching on the subject of baptism has been in favor of sprinkling?"

"No, I plead not guilty to the charge. I have not exalted sprinkling above immersion, nor immersion above sprinkling, but have left them both upon a common level."

"Since, then, you have not exalted one above the other, how do you account for 95 per cent. of your converts choosing sprinkling rather than immersion?"

"Really, I have never thought of that particular phase of the subject, Bro. Birch, but I presume the people considered sprinkling the more convenient."

"I believe you are right, Bro. Logan; convenience is certainly the only reason that can be assigned for it. There is in humanity, as we all know, a disposition to choose the easy, rather than the hard, way for doing things, when convinced that the same end may be attained; and such a disposition is perfectly legitimate and right. There is no good reason why a man should persist in pulling a heavy load over a rough and hilly roadway if there be another way of equal length leading to the same place that is smooth and level. But, mark you, that apparently inherent disposition in humanity to choose the easy rather than the difficult way, when convinced that the same end may be at-

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tained, is not to be taken as evidence of their unwillingness to travel the difficult, when convinced that it would be more pleasing unto God.

“If those men who introduced sprinkling as a substitute for Christian baptism did so because they thought such a change necessary in order to induce penitent believers to be baptized, they were guilty of grossly misjudging their fellow-men, for the thousands and tens of thousands of men and women who have suffered martyrdom for the cause of Christ proves beyond all doubt that the penitent believer in Christ is not only willing to stem the flood, but also the flames, when fully convinced that loyalty to Christ demands it. It is not the preacher’s mission to try to make the way of life easy, but to convince the people that it is God’s will that they should walk in that way.

“Did you ever stop to consider why Christ chose preaching as the means of saving the world? Was it not because he knew the great mass of the people could never be reached in any other way? I heard a man say : (and he had made a careful study of the subject) that only five per cent. of the people are independent thinkers on the subject of religion; that is, persons who can and will take the time and trouble to investigate for themselves and form their conclusions by a careful weighing of evidence. The remaining 95 per cent. are so engrossed with the business and pleasures of life that they either can not or will not take the time for personal investigation. Christ evidently knew that such conditions would exist, and

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hence, in giving His commission to His apostles, instead of telling them to go and put a Bible into the hands of every man and woman—which course would have been sufficient were all independent thinkers and investigators after truth—He said unto them, ‘Go and preach the gospel’ unto them. And, my brother, it’s the only way we can ever reach the masses. Ninety-five per cent. of the people are waiting, like clay in the potter’s shop, to be molded by us preachers into vessels of honor or dishonor, according as we present unto them the claims of Christ, and I firmly believe, Bro. Logan, that, in the majority of cases, we will find the people just as submissive as the clay to endure hardness, when fully convinced that it is necessary for their spiritual welfare. May I ask, Bro. Logan, how many persons you have baptized?”

“I haven’t the figures at hand, Bro. Birch, but I think I may safely say that, during the nine years of my ministry, I have baptized approximately a thousand persons.”

“Thank you, Bro. Logan, and pardon me for bringing my own work into contrast with yours, for I assure you it is only with the best of motives that I do it. My ministry covers a longer period of time than does yours—fifteen years. During that time I have baptized more than two thousand persons, and not one of them requested to be sprinkled, while, according to your statement, 95 per cent. of yours so requested. How are we going to account for this difference? We can account for it in no other way than upon the grounds of our teaching. In presenting the gospel to

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the people, I have contended for the 'one baptism' taught and practiced by the apostles; viz., the immersion in water of penitent believers in Christ. In other words, I have brought the people face to face with the plain statement made by the apostle Paul, when he said, 'We are buried with him by baptism into death,' and, when convinced of their duty, I have found them ready and willing to respond; and what they have done for me they would have done for you, had you earnestly contended for the 'one baptism' which your investigation convinced you the Bible taught and to which you yourself submitted."

"Perhaps you are right, Bro. Birch; but, while investigation convinced me that the Bible taught immersion, yet others think they find in it authority for sprinkling."

Bro. Mason: "Will Bro. Logan, or any one else, please point out to us a single passage, either in the Old Testament or the New, that authorizes sprinkling for baptism?"

Mr. Wilson: "I call the brother's attention to Matt. 3:11, wherein John says: 'I indeed baptize you with water.' That, to my mind, proves that John either sprinkled or poured water upon them."

"You are very easily convinced, Bro. Wilson, if it requires no stronger evidence than is contained in that passage to do it. Seriously, my brother, that passage doesn't contain any information whatever as to how John baptized his converts. It simply affirms that water was the element used, but how he used it isn't hinted at in the passage, even as it stands in the

Authorized Version. If it is the use of the word 'with' that enables you to see sprinkling or pouring in it, I would suggest that a person could be drowned *with* water as truly as being submerged in it, or by having it sprinkled or poured upon him. Indeed, Peter, speaking of the old world, says: 'The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.' It was not the material world that perished, but the people; and it was not until they were submerged that they perished. For forty days God had been sprinkling them with rain from heaven, but it was not until He had succeeded in overwhelming them that He accomplished their destruction; and Peter says He did it '*with* water.' Seeing, then, that a person can be destroyed *with* water by being submerged therein, it follows as a logical conclusion that a person can be baptized *with* water in the same way. So, granting that King James' translators have rightly translated that passage, still it doesn't justify you in saying that John either sprinkled or poured his converts. But we have evidence for believing that King James' translators wrongly translated that passage, the strongest being the fact that the American committee, associated with the British, in the more recent revision, have taken the word 'with' out of the passage and placed the word 'in' in its stead, so that the American Revised Version reads, 'I indeed baptize you *in* water,' instead of *with* water. The New Testament committee was composed of a number of the most eminent scholars which our country affords, and by far the majority of them were affiliated with churches that practice

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sprinkling or pouring for baptism, so that it can not be said they were led to make such a change from any selfish motive, but simply because the original manuscripts at their command demanded it. So, you see, Bro. Wilson, your own brethren have robbed you of whatever consolation that text has afforded you."

"But I would not have you think, Bro. Mason, that we base our practice upon that passage alone. There are other passages that point in the direction of sprinkling. For instance, Isaiah says: 'And he shall sprinkle many nations' (Isa. 52:15); and Paul says: 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water' (Heb. 10:22)."

After waiting a few moments, Bro. Birch said: "I had hoped Bro. Mason would respond to Bro. Wilson's remarks, but, as he doesn't seem inclined to, I feel impelled to respond myself. I presume, Bro. Wilson, you regard your reference from Isaiah as referring to Christ, the promised Messiah, do you not?"

"Yes, sir, I do so regard it."

"Then, you consider that passage to be a prophecy looking forward to the time when Christ, having established His kingdom, should go forth from nation to nation sprinkling water upon the heads of men and women, preparatory to their entrance upon their work as citizens of His kingdom?"

"No, sir, I do not consider it as teaching that Christ Himself should do it, but that His disciples should, in His name and upon His authority."

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“But I call your attention to the fact that the word ‘water’ isn’t in the text at all. Where, then, do you get your authority for saying that it refers to the sprinkling of water? In spite of your effort to shift the responsibility of this sprinkling upon the disciples, yet the text says, ‘*He* shall sprinkle many nations.’ But, so far as the record goes, Christ never baptized any one with water during all His public ministry, either by sprinkling, pouring or immersion; and now that He has ascended into heaven, we may rest assured that He is not so engaged. However, we are not left in ignorance of the nature of the work in which He is now engaged, nor of the manner in which He is seeking to accomplish it. He is now our High Priest, and, as such, His sprinkling is that of blood, rather than of water. Let us carefully notice a few passages:

“ ‘Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens’ (Heb. 8:1).

“This teaches, first, that Christ is our High Priest; second, that He occupies a position on the right hand of the throne, which is indicative of power.

“ ‘But into the second went the high priest alone, not without blood, which he offered for himself and the errors of the people’ (Heb. 9:7).

“This teaches that, under the old covenant, the high priest once each year entered into the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle, carrying with him blood, which he there offered for himself and the people.

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“ ‘For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God’ (Heb. 9:13, 14).

“This teaches that the blood which the high priest offered was sprinkled upon those who had been defiled, and that it is the blood of Christ (our High Priest) that cleanses our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. Since, then, under the old covenant, it was blood which the high priest used to sprinkle the unclean, and since Christ is our High Priest, it is more reasonable to conclude that when Isaiah said, ‘He shall sprinkle many nations,’ he had reference to his work as high priest, and to the sprinkling of blood rather than of water. Indeed, Peter seems to have had the same idea, for, in writing to the brethren, he calls them the ‘elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ’ (1 Pet. 1:2). Note the steps in the process of their becoming the ‘elect of God’: ‘Through sanctification of the Spirit.’ It was the Divine Spirit, speaking to them through the gospel, that led them to obedience. Obedience brought them into contact with the blood of Christ—not literally, but figuratively. The blood of Christ was spilt in His death, and, in order to be brought into contact with it, we must, in some way, be brought into His death. But how can

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this be done? Paul says it is accomplished through baptism: 'Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death' (Rom. 6:3, 4). It was to persons who had passed through such a process as this that the apostle said: 'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.' They were persons who, through faith, repentance and baptism, had had the atoning blood of Christ applied to their hearts, until, in full assurance of faith and a consciousness of sins forgiven, they could draw near the mercy-seat and commune with God."

Bro. Logan: "Mr. Chairman, as already stated, I am an immersionist, both by conviction and practice; that is, by practice so far as my own baptism was concerned, for nothing short of immersion would have satisfied me; yet in administering the ordinance to others my common practice was to sprinkle them. I did it because they requested it. I remember a conversation I had with the first man who came to me to be baptized. He asked: 'What do you consider to be the proper mode of baptism?' I answered: 'Immersion.' He referred me to the very passages which have been under discussion here to-night, and said he thought they contained some authority for sprinkling, and requested to be baptized in that way. It was upon the strength of those passages that I sprinkled him and many others since. But, since listening to

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this discussion, I am persuaded that I did wrong. What right have I to take a passage of Scripture that refers to the sprinkling of blood upon the heart and use it as authority for sprinkling water upon the body and calling it baptism, when the Scriptures clearly teach that baptism is the burial in water of penitent believers in Christ? Certainly I have none. And since sprinkling as a substitute for Christian baptism is one of the barriers in the way of organic Christian union, I declare unto you, brethren, my purpose to henceforth refrain from the practice, and both teach and practice the 'one baptism' taught and practiced by Christ and His inspired apostles—viz., the immersion in water of penitent believers—leaving Christ, our great High Priest, to apply, in His own way, His sacrificial blood to their hearts."

At the close of his remarks several voices rang out with a hearty "Amen," after which Bro. Clark arose and said:

"Brethren, Bro. Logan has spoken my sentiments exactly. I, too, have been guilty of substituting sprinkling for the baptism taught and practiced by the apostles, and I am frank to confess that it was always with a feeling that I had failed to come up to the apostolic standard that I did it; but I am resolved to no longer stand in the way of the union of the people of God by practicing a substitute for Christian baptism. Henceforth I shall teach, with Paul, that 'we are buried with Christ by baptism into death,' and my practice shall be according to my teaching. I will say also to those present who have received at my hands

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this substitute for Christian baptism, that I shall esteem it a pleasure to immerse you.”

Again the auditorium rang with “Amens.”

Bro. Birch: “I rejoice, Mr. Chairman, to know these brethren have resolved to abandon this substitute for Christian baptism. For, in addition to its being a barrier to our union, it is also a meaningless practice. The two ordinances which the Lord has left with His church—baptism and the Lord’s Supper—have each an important mission to perform. Paul says: ‘As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord’s death till he come.’ Through this sacred ordinance, then, the humble disciple of the Lord, in a silent, yet forceful, way, proclaims the fact that Christ died to redeem the world from sin. But the death of Christ was not all that was necessary in order to redeem man from sin. His resurrection was just as necessary as was His death. Indeed, the apostle Paul makes His resurrection the keystone for supporting the whole structure of human redemption. He says: ‘If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain’ (1 Cor. 15:14). Since, then, the resurrection of Christ was an event equal in importance with His death, and since the Lord appointed an ordinance to perpetuate the memory of His death, it is only reasonable that He should also appoint one to perpetuate the thought of His resurrection. And that He did when He ordained the ordinance of Christian baptism. Just as the humble disciple, in a silent, yet forceful, way, proclaims the fact of Christ’s death in partaking of the bread and wine, so the penitent

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believer, in submitting to the ordinance of baptism, is proclaiming, in a silent, yet forceful, way, not only His death and burial, but also the great fact that He arose from the tomb. I therefore rejoice in the stand which these brethren have taken."

Mr. Sims: "Mr. President, as I see it, the greatest barrier in the way of our union has begun to crumble by the stand taken by these two brethren. The only doubt I ever had regarding our ability to effect a union between the several churches of our town grew out of the baptismal question. I never did believe that a community of believers, who had grown sick and tired of denominationalism, would permit their party names to stand in the way of their union, when the 'one Lord' whom they serve had offered them a name which they could all wear without any sacrifice of conscience. Nor could I believe they would permit their human creeds and systems of faith to keep them apart, when the 'one faith' of the New Testament was at their command. But whether they could all be induced to accept the 'one baptism' was a question concerning which I had some doubt. The magnanimous stand, however, taken by Bros. Logan and Clark has well-nigh banished that doubt from my mind. I sincerely trust that those who compose the churches to which they minister will manifest the same magnanimous spirit, and thus rid us of one of the most troublous barriers that stand in the way of our union."

Evelyn Drew: "Mr. Chairman, to me belongs the distinction of being the last to receive Bro. Clark's substitute for Christian baptism. It was only a short

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time ago that I decided to unite with the church, and when Bro. Clark asked me how I desired to be baptized, I told him I desired to be sprinkled, and that I preferred to attend to the matter at once, and it was done. I consider myself, Mr. Chairman, a representative of that great throng of young people, and not a few older ones, who every year go into the church with but little or no knowledge of the Bible. I speak truly when I say that, prior to the time I united with the church, I had never given the subject of Christian baptism a single serious thought. I had seen persons baptized—some by immersion and some by sprinkling—but supposed it was just a matter of choice, as I had heard persons say one was as good as the other; and, with that idea in my mind, I chose that which involved the least inconvenience. But the very day I united with the church I made a vow to study my Bible and make it the rule of my faith and practice. I have read and reread every passage in the New Testament bearing upon the subject, and when I read of the people going ‘to the water,’ going ‘down into the water,’ being ‘buried with Christ by baptism’ and ‘coming up out of the water,’ I failed to see any similarity between the way I was baptized and the way John and the apostles baptized their converts, and I gladly accept Bro. Clark’s offer to immerse me just as soon as it is convenient for him to do so.”

Bro. Clark: “Mr. Chairman, since Sister Evelyn has thrown the responsibility of her immersion upon me, and left the time subject to my convenience, I will say to her that I will be at her service to-morrow after-

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noon at three o'clock. At that hour I will be at the accustomed place at the creek, ready to immerse her and as many others as desire to more fully obey their Lord in the matter of their baptism."

Bro. Mason: "Mr. Chairman, I have opposed this scheme from the beginning, and have no doubt but that you and all these people regard me the most stubborn person in the assembly; but, whatever else you may charge me with, one thing is certain, you can not charge me with hiding my ideas under a bushel, for I have tried to let you know just where I stood and what I thought about the matter from time to time. One of my reasons for opposing it was I thought it impracticable. As a Baptist, I have no sympathy with human substitutes for Christian baptism, and I could never consent to any basis of union that would regard them as being equally valid with the baptism authorized by the New Testament, and I supposed that those who practiced such substitutes would not consent to any basis that would not tolerate them. For that reason, I considered organic union an impossibility; but I must confess, Mr. Chairman, that the stand taken by Bros. Logan and Clark has wrought a change in my mind regarding the matter."

Bro. Logan: "I am glad, Bro. Mason, in being instrumental in producing some change in your mind regarding this subject. I, too, had an opinion as to what was going to be the greatest hindrance in the way of our union, and that was that spirit of denominational prejudice which causes people to turn away from the plain teaching of Christ and His apostles

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whenever their teaching comes into conflict with the teaching and practice of the church to which they belong, and in some of your former speeches I thought I saw evidences of that spirit, which seemed to render you both blind and deaf to the plain teaching of God's word in your zeal to uphold the teaching and practice of the Baptist Church. However, your last speech has given me hope that the spirit of denominational prejudice is not so deep-seated as I had thought."

"I admit, Bro. Logan, that my speeches have been rather Baptistie, but I am not willing to admit they were so because of denominational prejudice. I abhor such prejudice as much as any one, and try to steer clear of it. Still, I know it is possible for a person to be affected with some diseases without knowing it, and that may be the case with me; but I assure you I have no desire, nor intention, of ever becoming so affected with denominational prejudice as to lose sight of the plain teaching of God's word in my efforts to uphold Baptist theology. And, though I came into this conference with but little, or, to speak more correctly, with no, faith in the undertaking, yet I am free to admit I now have some, and I pledge you my word and honor, brethren, that I am ready to make every concession the word of God will admit in order to make the undertaking a success."

There was a ripple of applause and many hearty "Amens" as Bro. Mason was taking his seat, after which Mr. Sims arose and said:

"Mr. Chairman, now that Bro. Mason is with us, what use is there for further delay? Why not go to

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work at once pulling down these old structures, as has been suggested, and out of the material then at our command proceed to build up the magnificent structure we all have in mind? To this end, I move you, Mr. Chairman, that we adjourn to meet at our respective places of worship to-morrow evening, that each church may discuss the matter among themselves."

The motion, duly seconded, was submitted and carried.

Mr. Middleton: "Mr. Chairman, as the members of the Christian Church have no house of worship, I shall be pleased to have them meet in my home."

CHAPTER XVII.

EACH CHURCH DISCUSSES THE MATTER

TUESDAY was a busy day for the people of Alpha. At nine o'clock a number of the business men of the town met in the directors' room at the bank. At this meeting four men were chosen as delegates, one of whom was to represent the business men in each of the meetings to be held in the several churches.

At two o'clock the people began to move toward the creek. At three o'clock several hundred people had gathered upon the banks of the little stream, already held sacred in the memory of many, and destined to become sacred in the memory of many more of the inhabitants of the town and country surrounding as the place where they had formally dedicated their lives to the service of God and his Son Jesus Christ. Never before had such a throng gathered there to witness a baptismal service, for the reason, perhaps, that never before had they all felt so common an interest in such a service. Hitherto their interest in such services had been restrained somewhat by denominational ties; but now that those ties had been, at least partially, severed by the developments of the past few weeks, they could no longer restrain. It was soul-inspiring to see them and to hear them as, with uncovered heads, they stood

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upon the banks of that placid stream and sang those old, familiar lines:

“Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb,
And shall I fear to own His cause,
Or blush to speak His name?”

“Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
Or sailed through bloody seas?”

And then, with an earnestness indicating complete submission and a willingness to spend and be spent in the service of their one common Lord, they burst forth:

“Sure I must fight, if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord;
I’ll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy word.”

When the song was finished, Bro. Birch led in prayer, after which Bro. Clark spoke as follows:

“Friends, we have met here to-day under circumstances a little unusual. Twenty-five years ago I decided to dedicate my life to the service of Christ. When the question of baptism confronted me, I chose immersion, because, to my mind, that was more in accord with the teaching and practice of the early church. However, the church with which I united recognized sprinkling as equally valid with immersion, and after I began preaching, in conformity with the rules of the church, I sprinkled those who desired to be baptized in that way. Recent investigation, however, has convinced me that denominationalism is wrong, and that Christ meant His church to be a unit. That investigation has also convinced me that the

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diverse modes of baptism now being practiced is one of the barriers in the way of the union of the people of God, and I am resolved to henceforth teach and practice the 'one baptism' taught and practiced by the early church, to the end that my teaching and practice be no longer a hindrance to the union of God's people. As authority for such practice, let me read a few passages from God's word:

“ ‘And they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him’ (Acts 8:38).

“ ‘Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life’ (Rom. 6:4).

“ ‘Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead’ (Col. 2:12).

“Such, friends, is the authority which God's word furnishes us for that we are about to do. And now if Miss Drew will step to the front, we will proceed to follow the example of those men of old, and thus settle forever the question of her baptism.”

When Evelyn Drew stepped out from the crowd, she was accompanied by two others—Emogene Hale and Eva Jones—both of whom requested to be baptized. Emogene united with the church the same day that Evelyn did, but Eva had been a member for several years. At the time of her union with the church she had requested to be immersed, but the preacher then in charge so bitterly objected that she finally consented

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to be sprinkled. These facts she had made known to Bro. Clark, who, turning to the audience, said: "Friends, I have sprinkled a great many persons at their request, but never have I tried to dissuade a single person who came to me requesting immersion. Here is a young lady, Sister Eva Jones, who has been a member of our church for a number of years. She tells me she requested to be immersed at the time she united with the church, but the preacher then in charge persuaded her to be sprinkled, and she now accepts this opportunity of obeying her Lord in what she considers His appointed way. It may be that there are others here desirous of so doing. If so, I shall be pleased to have you indicate it by stepping to the front and taking your stand with these."

The first to respond was Mr. Combs, the editor, who was followed by his wife and two children, all of whom were members of the Presbyterian Church. Next came the Wade family, six in number, also Presbyterians. Following them came Mrs. Lane.

Profound silence reigned throughout the great audience as one after another of these were led down into the water and there buried with their Lord in baptism. When the last had been led forth from the water, Bro. Logan pronounced the benediction.

There was a full attendance of the members at the several churches in the evening. Each was formally opened with singing and prayer, after which they proceeded to elect a chairman and secretary.

After a few brief remarks by the chairman, they asked for a general expression of views as to the devel-

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opments of the last few days. To this the people responded with alacrity. Many who had not committed themselves in the larger meetings, feeling less restraint among their own brethren, spoke freely of the advantages or disadvantages of union, as they happened to see it. But by far the majority of those who spoke expressed themselves as heartily in favor of union in all save the Brethren Church. There the speakers seemed about equally divided. At the Presbyterian Church there was not a single one who opposed it, and the same was true of those who composed the Christian Church. At the Baptist Church two or three spoke against it, one of them designating it as a 'wildcat scheme,' with which he proposed having nothing to do. At the Methodist Church there were two who seemed to be wavering in the balances, not knowing whether to approve or oppose.

When the speechmaking was over at the Baptist Church, Mr. Jones arose and said: "I move you, Mr. Chairman, that, as a body, this church unite with their brethren of the other churches of the town to organize a local congregation to be known as 'The Church of Christ at Alpha,' said congregation to recognize the Bible, and it alone, as its rule of faith and practice; and that the trustees of this building be authorized to turn over the same to the trustees of said union congregation, to be used by them, in whatever way they may choose, toward building a church-house that will be adequate to the needs of the new congregation."

Mr. Phelps: "Mr. Chairman, I am opposed to the brother's motion. As already stated, I consider this

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nothing but a wildcat scheme which has been hatched out among us, and one from which no good will ever come. As a member of this congregation, I own part interest in this house, and I object to disposing of it in the way suggested in the motion. If Bro. Jones wishes to unite with them, let him do it, but let him leave the house alone."

"That's just what I say," chimed in old Bro. Barlow, who, for years, had been nothing but a figure-head in the congregation.

Mr. Sims: "I am in favor, Mr. Chairman, of Bro. Jones, and as many others as care to do so, taking the brother's advice, so far as uniting with this union movement is concerned; but I am not in favor of leaving the house to him and Bro. Barlow. We haven't joined the union movement yet. We are still members of the congregation, and we don't propose to leave it until all matters of business have been properly adjusted. And, inasmuch as the former motion received no second, I move you, Mr. Chairman, that our trustees be authorized to sell this building at the price listed in our last report to our district association, and the trustees be authorized to pay to as many of the members of this congregation as request it their proportionate share of the proceeds of such sale, and to turn the balance over to the trustees of the new organization."

Mr. Lawson: "I second the motion."

Mr. Barlow: "Mr. Chairman, I second the first motion."

Chairman: "You are too late with your second, Bro. Barlow. There is a motion, duly seconded, before

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the house. Brethren, you have heard the motion. What is your pleasure? Are you ready for the question?"

"We are ready for the question," shouted a voice from the rear of the building.

Chairman: "As many as favor the motion, please rise to your feet."

All save five or six persons arose.

Chairman: "As many as oppose the motion, please stand."

Messrs. Phelps and Barlow arose, but when they saw the others, who remained seated when the former vote was taken, were not going to stand, they resumed their seats without an indication from the Chair.

Chairman: "Brethren, the motion has been adopted by an almost unanimous vote. What is your further pleasure?"

Mr. Phelps: "Mr. Chairman, I just wish to say that I consider the motion just adopted a harmless one, for I think you will search a long while before you find any one who cares to invest in a church building, if I'm any judge."

Mr. Blair (who was one of the delegates appointed at the business men's meeting): "I would like to ask, Mr. Chairman, at what figures your church building was listed in the report referred to in the motion?"

Chairman: "If I mistake not, Mr. Blair, it was \$2,500."

Mr. Blair: "Then I will take the building at that price, and will meet the trustees at the bank to-morrow morning at nine o'clock to transfer the title."

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Mr. Jones: "Mr. Chairman, as one of the trustees, I will say to those who are in a hurry to get their apportionment from the sale of this property that, if they will meet us at the bank to-morrow just after the noon hour, they shall have the apportionment due them."

At the Methodist Church there were two who remained seated when the vote was taken on the subject of union, and when the question of disposing of the church property was raised, one of these called attention to the fact that it was not within the power of the local congregation to dispose of the church property, as the title was vested in conference.

"Then," said the chairman, "we will simply leave it for conference to dispose of."

At the Presbyterian Church there was no opposition. The trustees, by unanimous vote, were instructed to transfer the church property to the trustees of the united church, provided it was found that a majority of the churches of the town favored such a union.

Those who composed the Christian Church had no property to dispose of, but were unanimous in favor of the proposed union.

At the Brethren Church the sailing was not so smooth. Quite a number were found to oppose it. Yet, when the vote was taken, a majority were on the side of union, but, because of the large minority who opposed it, it was thought best to continue their own organization.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOUR CHURCHES AGREE TO UNITE

IN compliance with his request, the trustees of the Baptist Church met Mr. Blair at the bank the following morning and transferred to him title to the church building and grounds, receiving his check in payment. In the afternoon seven of the members appeared before the trustees and demanded their part of the proceeds of the sale, which was given them. At eight o'clock the people again assembled at the amphitheater.

"I feel," said the chairman, "this should be very largely a service of thanksgiving, and, to this end, let us have a number of voluntary prayers, thanking God for the progress already made and asking Him for further guidance."

When the season of prayer had ended, the chairman spoke as follows:

"In the midst of our rejoicing we find one cause for regret, and that is that those who compose the Brethren Church haven't seen their way clear to unite with us in our efforts to return to the unity of the faith and practice of the early followers of Christ. I trust, however, they may yet see their way clear to do so. For the benefit of those who, perchance, haven't

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heard the result of the several meetings held last evening, I will say that, with but very few exceptions, the people composing the Baptist and Methodist Churches were heartily in favor of union. At the Presbyterian and Christian Churches the vote was unanimous for union. As already stated, the members of the Brethren Church have decided to retain their own separate organization. It is only fair, however, to state that a majority of their members voted in favor of union; but, because of the large minority who opposed, it was thought best to remain a separate body."

Mr. Sullivan: "It is only fair also, Mr. Chairman, to state that a very large minority were opposed to the majority yielding that point, and I happened to be one of that minority. I admire that spirit of liberality which makes a majority willing to yield to the minority for the sake of peace and harmony, when such can be done without conflicting with the expressed will of Christ. But when it comes to the majority, or even the minority, yielding up something which Christ has enjoined, then it becomes both the privilege and duty of individuals to choose the stand they shall take. I therefore publicly announce my intention of taking my stand with those of Christ's followers who are endeavoring to bring about a state of union among His followers, in harmony with His will, as expressed in the prayer which He offered just before His death. And, in justification of my stand, I will say that it has been clearly demonstrated to my mind during these meetings that denominationalism is wrong, and that the barriers which stand in the way of union, when

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reduced to their last analysis, are only matters of mere human opinion. One of the arguments advanced in our meeting last night was that 'if we gave up our organization, we would have to give up the practice of "foot-washing."' I would like to ask the brother who made that statement why we would have to give up that practice?"

Mr. Ames: "Simply because the people with whom we would unite do not believe in such a practice."

"May I ask, Bro. Ames, if there are any members of our church to whom you would refuse a letter of commendation were they to ask for it?"

"No, sir; I consider all our members in good standing, and would not hesitate to grant them letters."

"And yet you are aware we have some members who do not believe in the practice of 'foot-washing' as a church ordinance. After returning to our home last night, my wife and I counted twelve whom we had heard express themselves as not believing in the practice."

Mr. Raines: "Your figures are too low, Bro. Sullivan; I know of seventeen myself, and ten of them haven't attended a 'foot-washing' service for five consecutive years."

Mr. Sullivan: "You say, Bro. Ames, that if we were to unite with these brethren, we would have to give up the practice of 'foot-washing,' because the brethren with whom we would unite do not believe in it, and yet, according to Bro. Raines, we have seventeen in our church who do not believe in it; and these, according to your own statement, are members in good

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standing. Now, if these seventeen who do not believe in 'foot-washing' as a church ordinance can belong to the same church with sixty-eight others who do, and be members with them in good standing, can you give any good reason why a hundred, or two hundred, or any number of non-believers in such a practice, may not belong to the same church with these sixty-eight, and all be members in good standing?"

"In that case the non-believers in the practice would be in the majority, and could do away with the practice."

"The majority doesn't always try to force the minority to conform to their opinions. We have in all our churches a very small minority who think they ought to meet together in mid-week for prayer and praise. By far the majority doesn't think it necessary, and yet they do not try to prevent the few meeting in such a service. And it is my candid opinion that, if we were to unite with these brethren, and a number of us should feel that we ought to meet together some time during the year for the purpose of washing one another's feet, no word of protest would be uttered by these brethren."

Bro. Birch: "I think, brethren, that Bro. Sullivan is quite right in that statement. At least, so far as I am individually concerned, those brethren could wash one another's feet as often as they pleased, provided they didn't try to interfere with certain duties which I owe to my Lord; as, for instance, the duty of commemorating His death and suffering at the Lord's table. That privilege I hold most sacred, and

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I would seriously question the right of any one to place restrictions about the Lord's table that even the apostles did not see fit to place there. There is nothing in the New Testament to indicate that the apostles, in their ministrations, ever connected 'foot-washing' with the Lord's Supper by making the former a prerequisite to the latter. My most serious objection is not to the practice itself, but to the unapostolic connection which has been established between it and the Lord's Supper. We have just learned from one of your own members that ten of your own brethren have absented themselves from the Lord's table for five consecutive years, presumably because, to approach it, they would have to pass through the ordeal of 'foot-washing' as a church ordinance, something the apostles never required of any one, and something they themselves did not believe was required of them. As I see it, then, the only thing necessary to remove all objections to the practice of 'foot-washing' by those who desire to practice it would be to sever the connection which you have established between it and the Lord's Supper, and let the latter occupy in the church to-day the position it occupied in the days of the apostles; viz., a weekly reminder of our suffering Saviour, and a service to be participated in, without let or hindrance, by all those who, having examined themselves, desire so to do. There is no room to doubt that the Lord's Supper was intended to be a perpetual ordinance in the church, but there is ample room to doubt that 'foot-washing' was ever so intended. To my mind, the strongest evidence that it

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was not is found in the fact that the apostles nowhere taught or practiced it. Certainly, if Christ intended it to be a perpetual ordinance in His church, the apostles would have known it, and, if they knew it, they certainly omitted a part of their duty in failing to instruct us in regard to it."

Chairman: "I think Bro. Birch quite right in that statement. It was the apostles, guided by the Divine Spirit, whom Christ entrusted with the work of organizing His church and setting in order the things necessary for the work it was to do in the world, and, if Christ had intended 'foot-washing' to be one of the ordinances of His church, certainly the apostles would have left some instructions to that end, at least made some allusion to its practice, as such, in the early church. But, in the absence of any such allusion, or of apostolic command, we feel unauthorized in making it a test of fellowship in the church. We can not do better, brethren, than to imitate the early disciples in recognizing the inspired apostles as our authority in all matters of church government and Christian conduct, for, as Bro. Birch has said, 'the apostles, guided as they were by the Divine Spirit, were better equipped to interpret for us the meaning of Christ's utterances than are any of the uninspired men of to-day.' And now, in order that we may ascertain how many there are in the audience who are willing to take their stand with us in this effort which we are making to unite the people of God, so far as our town and community are concerned, a number of the brethren will now pass through the audience and leave with each person a

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small card, upon which all Christians desiring to enter into this union will please write their names. You will find a small pencil attached to each card."

When the enrollment was finished, it was found that 460 persons had handed in their names.

Mr. Blair: "Mr. Chairman, as you are aware, I have never been a member of any church. Not that I am an unbeliever, for I doubt if there is a person here to-night with a stronger faith in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth, or in the all-sufficiency of the church which He organized to meet the needs of humanity, than I. But I am only one of thousands of men who have become disgusted with the farce men have made of the church and of the Christian religion. It always was a disgusting sight to me to see all the way from two to a half-dozen little groups in the same little village on Sunday morning wending their way to as many different places of worship, when it would have taken them all combined to have made one respectable audience. And the sight was made even more disgusting to me by a consciousness of the fact that the highest authority they had for many of their doctrines and practices was the ruling of some church council or the edict of some uninspired man. Since I have been old enough to think for myself, I have never had any faith in a divided church to meet the needs of humanity, and that lack of faith has kept me out of the church up to this time. However, as you are now making what I conceive to be an honest and determined effort to extricate the church from the coils of denominationalism, I feel that I no longer have excuse for

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standing aloof, and now declare unto you my readiness to take my stand with you upon the Bible, and it alone, as our rule of faith and practice, and to render all the aid within my power to make the church of Christ at Alpha a worthy successor of the Jerusalem church, of which it was said that 'the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.' "

Bro. Birch: "Brethren, the success of this undertaking is already assured. If we accomplish nothing more, the removing of the barrier that stood between this man and the church of Christ is in itself sufficient to justify us for the labor expended. However, I am persuaded that Mr. Blair is not the only one who has been standing aloof from the church because of our unscriptural divisions, but who are now ready to take their stand with us. I would suggest, therefore, that all who are willing to make such a surrender of themselves to Christ and His cause as the New Testament requires come to the front."

The rising of Mr. Blair to respond to this request was only the signal for many more to follow. Without even the inspiration of a song, twenty-five men and ten women responded. These all, in response to the question asked them, publicly confessed their faith in Christ and declared their willingness to let His word govern their conduct.

Mr. Sims: "Mr. Chairman, I move that we now adjourn to meet again to-morrow evening, for the purpose of effecting an organization and attending to such other business as may come before us."

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The motion, duly seconded, was submitted and carried.

Chairman: "Before we adjourn, let me say that I am requested to announce that, at three o'clock tomorrow afternoon, we will meet at the accustomed place to attend the ordinance of baptism."

The meeting was adjourned with prayer by Bro. Mason.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ORGANIZATION

PROMPTLY at three o'clock of the following afternoon an even larger audience than on the previous occasion assembled upon the banks of the little stream that ran near the town. Besides the thirty-five who made the confession the evening before, there were fifty others baptized. The greater part of these had handed in their names the evening before as prospective members of the new organization, but, having only been sprinkled, they chose this opportunity of conforming to the "one baptism" taught in the New Testament, and which was to be the future practice of the church of Christ at Alpha.

The evening session at the amphitheater was largely of a business nature. After a season of song and prayer, the chairman said:

"In accord with the action of the meeting last evening, we will now proceed to the work of organization. Our 'Guide Book' teaches us that, in the days of the apostles, each local congregation of the church of Christ was supplied with a plurality of elders and deacons, the elders to look after the spiritual and the deacons the temporal needs of the congregation, the number necessary depending upon the size of the con-

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gregation. What is now your pleasure, brethren, with respect to the selection of these several officers?"

Mr. Middleton: "I move, Mr. Chairman, that a committee, composed of our several pastors, be appointed to submit to us the names of such persons as in their judgment would be suited for these offices, and also one each for clerk and treasurer."

The motion, when seconded, was submitted and carried.

Bro. Clark: "Mr. Chairman, having imposed this duty upon us, we would be pleased to have the brethren indicate to us the number of names they desire us to submit for elders and also for deacons."

Mr. Sims: "Mr. Chairman, I would suggest seven for elders and double that number for deacons."

Chairman: "Unless some one objects, we will let this suggestion of Bro. Sims stand; and, while these brethren are arranging their list, we will take up any other matter of business you desire to bring before the meeting."

Mr. Wade: "While our preachers are engaged with the work assigned them, I would suggest we discuss the subject of pastoral service for our new congregation. The merging of four churches and a part of the fifth into one has left us with a surplus of preachers on our hands, and what to do with them is one of the questions which now confront us."

Mr. Sims: "At a Bible-school convention, held in our town last fall, it was shown by one of the field workers that there are several localities within the borders of our county where evangelistic services are

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greatly needed. The people living in those localities are not within reach of any church, and, consequently, are without church privileges. It is not their choice to so live. Several times they have appealed to us to send them a preacher to make known to them the way of life, but the answer has always been, 'Our preachers are all engaged, and we can not spare them.' In our divided state we have had to use from two to three preachers here in our town each Sunday. But, now that we have united, it will be possible for us to build up these waste places in our county, and with no more cost to us than we have hitherto borne. My plan would be for this, as the mother church of the county, to retain the services of these four preachers at the same salary we have been paying them (we will be just as able to pay them now as before), and let them minister to us here and to the people in these neglected districts of our county. I would at least favor such an arrangement for the remainder of the year. Perhaps then we could make other and better arrangements."

Mr. Majors: "Although not a citizen of your town, Mr. Chairman, yet, with your permission, I would be pleased to speak a word just here."

"We shall be pleased to hear you, Mr. Majors."

"I happen to be a resident of one of those neglected districts to which Bro. Sims referred a few moments ago. Our nearest church is eight miles away. There is ample room in our community for a church without in the least interfering with any other church, and our people want one. We want one that we can all belong to. We don't want some little denomina-

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tional organization that only about one out of every half-dozen of our people could belong to without having to do something our consciences would condemn us for. We want a church that will recognize Christ as its head and His word as its rule of conduct. A church that requires of men as much, but no more, and as little, but fully as much, as the inspired apostles required of men in their day. For the establishment of such a church as that in our community I feel confident, Mr. Chairman, our people would gladly pay all cost. So that the man whom you send down there, while still in your employ, and looking to you for his pay, would be able to replace in your treasury every dollar his services have cost you."

Mr. Middleton: "I feel confident, Mr. Chairman, that statement of Mr. Majors will be proved true by the people of the community in which he lives. I feel confident also that the cost of sustaining the work in the other fields mentioned is not going to overburden us. I move you, therefore, that the services of all our pastors be retained the remainder of the year."

The motion was sustained by an overwhelming majority.

The preachers having returned, Bro. Logan read aloud their report as follows: "We, your committee, beg leave to submit as follows: For elders, Lane, Middleton, Sims, Combs, Sullivan, Jones and Wade. For deacons, Drew, Potter, Hale, Davis, Simpson, Dyer, Berger, Grooms, Lowry, Perkins, Woodson, Scott, Andrews and Murphy. For clerk, Gertrude Lane. For treasurer, Blair."

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The recommendations were unanimously adopted by the congregation, and the persons named were declared elected.

Mr. Blair: "Mr. Chairman, we are now a congregation, numbering upward of five hundred souls, and, while we have two church-houses at our command, yet we are practically without a religious home, for neither of the houses is capable of accommodating our members, to say nothing of our neighbors and friends whom we expect to meet with us from time to time. The first problem, therefore, that confronts us is that of providing us a suitable church home. I move you, therefore, that a building committee of seven men be appointed by the Chair, who shall at once secure plans and estimates of the cost of construction of such a building as, in their estimation, will meet the needs of the congregation, and submit the same for approval at the earliest possible date; and, when plan is approved, said committee shall have charge of all the work connected with the gathering of funds and building the house."

The motion, duly seconded, was submitted and carried.

Mr. Middleton: "Mr. Chairman, in anticipation of their services being needed in a legal way, I move that a board of trustees, consisting of three members, be appointed, and that our chairman be one of the three."

This motion was seconded, submitted and carried, and the following were appointed: For building, Messrs. Blair, Wade, Combs, Hughes, Sullivan and Middleton. For trustees, Messrs. Lane, Sims and Watson.

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Chairman: "What is now your further pleasure, brethren?"

Mr. Watson: "I move that we do now adjourn, subject to the call of the chairman to hear the report of the building committee."

The motion carried, after which the chairman announced that regular preaching services would be held at the amphitheater each Lord's Day until further notice. The benediction was pronounced by Bro. Clark.

It was during the balmy days of the early part of the month of June that the great meetings were held which resulted in the union of four of the churches in the little town of Alpha. The reader is now carried forward to the latter half of the month of November.

For five months these brethren have been worshipping at the same altar, listening to the same preacher and sitting at the same table in communion with their one common Lord. To say that they were happy, only feebly expresses the real truth. They were enraptured, thrilled with sensations of felicity and bliss, all growing out of a consciousness of having done something of real worth for the cause of Christ and humanity. For, instead of having four men preach to them, in as many different groups, during the past five months, they had been content to all listen to the same preacher, while three others were representing them on the mission field, building up the waste places that had so long been neglected within the borders of their own county. And, as a result of their labors, one new church had been organized and two others were soon

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to be. Moreover, this additional work had all been accomplished without any additional financial burden upon the mother church. True to the prediction made by Mr. Majors, the people living in these several localities had gladly paid for all the service that had been rendered them. This, however, was not all the good these people, now numbering nearly six hundred, had been able to accomplish during the past five months.

At the suggestion of the deacons, a charity fund had been created. The nucleus of this fund was a \$500 subscription from Mr. Blair, but several hundred more had been added since the fund was started.

"The object of this fund," explained Mr. Drew, the day he made the appeal for its establishment, "is to enable us to meet our obligations to the poor. We have in our congregation no less than six families that need a little help. As an example, take the case of Sister McCormick, whose husband died last winter, leaving her with four small children to support, and nothing to do it with but her sewing-machine and needle.

"Take also the case of old Sister Gibson. It is true she has only one child to support, but we all know how she has worked and slaved at the washtub, from early morning until late at night, through hot and through cold, in order that she might give her daughter the benefit of an education such as our public schools were capable of offering her. We know also how the daughter, in appreciation of the sacrifice the mother

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was making for her, denied herself many of the innocent pleasures of life, in order the sooner to finish her school-work and secure a position that would enable her to lift some of the burdens from the mother's shoulders. Brethren, this young lady, a sister in our church, who stood at the head of the graduating class in our school last spring, could, I am told by Bro. Middleton, have a position in the bank that would pay her a salary which would insure a support for her and her mother, if only she had a few months' training in some business college. And, as I see it, it is the duty of the church, in a case so worthy as hers, to see that she has such training."

It was at the close of these remarks of Mr. Drew that Mr. Blair arose and started the charity fund with a subscription of \$500, and within a very few minutes several hundred more were added to the fund, and Clara Gibson was sent over to the county-seat to receive the training necessary to secure for her a position that would bring a ray of sunshine into her hitherto poverty-stricken home. Mrs. McCormick was relieved of the necessity of paying out \$5 of her hard-earned money each month for house rent. To one of her neighbors she said, after the church had paid her second month's rent: "I am sure, Mrs. Brown, you have no idea what a relief it has been to me to have the church do this. Many a sleepless night I have spent wondering where the money was to come from to pay the rent and meet all my other obligations. But now that the church has relieved me of the rent problem, I feel that I can get along nicely."

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These and other worthy cases had been helped by the church since the creation of the "Charity Fund," and the work had been so gratifying that the church had resolved never to be without such a fund. Indeed, several of the brethren, who carried insurance against future want, permitted their policies to lapse and turned the fees into the "Charity Fund" of the church, declaring that they coveted no better insurance against future want in this life, either for themselves or their families, than the tender ministries of six hundred men and women filled with the spirit of the Man of Galilee.

Another line of work had also received special attention since the four churches had united, and that was the work of caring for the sick. Under the supervision of Mr. Hale, whom the deacons had chosen for that work, efficient aid had been rendered every family that had been visited by sickness during the past five months. When it was made known to the congregation that Mr. Hale would have charge of that work, more than fifty persons gave him their names, with permission to call on them whenever such services were needed.

Still another forward step was taken when, under the supervision of Bro. Logan, the old Presbyterian church was converted into a free reading-room and circulating library, as well as a place for the social gatherings of the young people. Out of nearly two hundred homes of the town and community surrounding were gathered over a thousand volumes of books, covering subjects social, moral, political, commercial

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and religious. A knowledge of the contents of these books was considered necessary in order to the rounding out of the lives and character of the young people of the town and community surrounding, and in this way they sought to bring them within reach of all.

But still another work had been pushed to a happy consummation; viz., the work of providing the congregation with a suitable house of worship.

In harmony with the instructions they had received from the congregation, the building committee had gone forward with their work, first submitting to the congregation several plans which they had secured, any of which would have been adequate to the demands of the congregation; but the plan approved was one that utilized the Baptist Church as a part of the new building. The architect argued that, "as the walls of the building were all in good shape, and built of the same kind of brick that was contemplated being used in the new structure, and occupied the approved site, that, therefore, there was no reason why the building could not be utilized to advantage in the construction of the new edifice." Accordingly, the congregation approved this plan, and Mr. Blair transferred the building and grounds to the trustees as his contribution to the new structure.

The committee then went to work in earnest, gathering funds, buying material and employing workmen, who, for five months, were kept busily engaged upon a structure which was to be the religious home of the people of the town and of the community surrounding.

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It was just two days before the day set apart for the national Thanksgiving that the workmen completed their task. The week before Mr. Combs' paper had contained a picture and description of the new structure, together with the announcement that the first service would be held on Thanksgiving Day.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DEDICATION

THE day was a typical November day—a clear sky, but the temperature a bit cool, especially in the early morning. However, I am persuaded that neither rain, snow nor sleet would have kept the people away that day, for ever since it had been made known that the building would be completed before Thanksgiving the people had been looking forward to it with joyous anticipation.

Ten o'clock was the hour set for the service to begin, but long before that hour the roads leading to the city were thronged with vehicles of all descriptions, loaded with people who were coming in to the service, some of whom had come from remote parts of the county. Every business house in the town was closed, and, with one accord, the people seemed to say, "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord."

The house was built with a view to comfortably seating fifteen hundred people; but, by using chairs in the aisles and unoccupied spaces, it was possible to seat several hundred more, and to-day all this space was needed in order to seat the people.

In arranging a program for the service, Mr. Lane was made master of ceremonies. This honor he

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attempted to decline, but the brethren said "No." "No, Bro. Lane, it's your duty to preside. You remember you were chosen as chairman of the meetings last summer, and this is only the concluding session of those meetings, and you must preside."

"Very well, brethren, if you regard it my duty, I will do it," said Mr. Lane, as he arose from his seat on the rostrum, where he and the other elders and preachers had been assigned seats by the ushers. Stepping to the front, he said: "Brethren, sisters and friends, I desire first of all that the entire audience join with the chorus in singing that old and ever-appropriate hymn beginning 'All hail the power of Jesus' name.' "

Never before, in all the history of the town, had the singing of that old hymn so touched the hearts of the people as upon that occasion. But there was a reason for it. For five months those people had been thinking of Christ in a way different to that they had ever thought of Him before. Now, as never before, did they recognize Him as the sole and absolute head of the church, the Being before whom they should all stand in judgment and account for every sin, both of transgression and of omission of duty, according as their duty had been revealed unto them by the apostles chosen and inspired for that purpose. Hitherto the traditions of men and the mandates of church councils had been held by them in some measure of esteem and authority. But now they have turned away from these and are looking to Christ, and in their singing was clearly manifested a willingness on the part of all to

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“Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”

When the singing was done, Bro. Mason read a part of the fourth chapter of Acts, emphasizing the last few verses, wherein it is said, “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.”

After the Scripture reading, Bro. Logan was asked to lead in prayer. Then followed another soul-inspiring song, after which Bro. Birch read the President’s proclamation.

“It was,” explained the chairman, “the issuing of this proclamation by the chief executive of our country that caused us to select this day for the service in which we are now engaged. We felt that if any town or community of citizens throughout our land had cause for rendering thanks unto God, it was the people of this town and community. Little did we think last Thanksgiving Day, when about a half-hundred of our citizens assembled in the Baptist Church, now a mere annex of this magnificent building, that the events of another year would make possible such a gathering as this. It was not until I had heard that magnificent address delivered by Bro. Birch at the amphitheater last summer that I became fully convinced of the possibility of organic Christian union. You remember he said in that address that ‘there was one single proposition to which, if we all subscribe, union would follow as an inevitable result,’ and that proposition was the fact that *‘Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.’* Never before had I realized

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what mighty, revolutionary power was contained in that simple confession of faith in the Christ when made from the depths of a truly honest and penitent heart. It was while sitting there with bowed head that I became enrapt in a mental vision. In that vision I saw a magnificent building standing in the midst of our town, excelling in beauty every other building, for the people had said, 'It's the Lord's building, and must be second to none.' Then, in my reverie, I fancied I saw the people coming up to worship. From every part of the town and country surrounding they came, a great concourse of people, all animated by the same spirit and all breathing the same prayer, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

"Brethren, that vision, if it may be called a vision, has well-nigh been made a reality to me to-day. Upon leaving my home this morning, I looked in this direction, and said to myself: 'There stands the building, looking very much as I saw it in my imagination five months ago.' Looking about me, I said to myself again: 'There come the people.' From every part of our town and the country surrounding they have come, until it is now my privilege to look into the faces of the greatest concourse of people ever assembled within our town. However, there is one feature of my vision that has not been fully realized. In my vision the people who came up to worship all recognized that building as their church home. This feature of my vision, I am sorry to say, has not been fully realized, for those of our brethren who compose what is known as the 'Brethren Church' have not seen their

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way clear to unite with us, a fact which we regret very much."

At this juncture Bro. Powell, minister of the Brethren Church, arose and said:

"If you will suffer an interruption, Mr. Chairman, I shall be pleased to make a statement just here."

"We shall be pleased to hear you, Bro. Powell," responded Mr. Lane, cordially.

"The statement I wish to make is regarding the action taken by my brethren at a meeting held in our church last Sunday evening. But, leading up to that action, I desire to say that both my brethren and I have watched the development of this movement with keenest interest. We have seen how four weak and struggling churches, by combining their strength, energy and means, have been able to reach out a helping hand to three of the neglected districts of our county, starting in each of them a work that is destined to make those communities contributors to the public weal and evangels of the world.

"We have noted also the emphasis you are placing upon Bible-school work. In company with your architect, a few days ago I made a tour of inspection through this magnificent building, and was deeply impressed with its completeness and adaptability to that particular work.

"We have also noted the rich provision you are making for the development of the social nature of your children. Also their intellectual nature, by placing within their reach such books as are calculated to broaden their minds and to better equip them for

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the duties that shall confront them in the great battle of life.

“And last, but not least, we have noted your brotherly and sisterly ministrations to the sick and needy ones. As a people, we, too, believe in such a ministry, and have tried in a feeble way to practice it; but I am fully convinced, Mr. Chairman, that such work can never be done as effectually by a divided as by a united church. Take, for instance, the case of our Sister Gibson and her daughter, who, before this union movement began, were both members of our congregation. In conversation with the daughter shortly after her graduation last spring, she told me that she desired so much to be able to take a course in book-keeping, as she felt she would then be able to secure a position that would enable her to lighten the load of responsibility which her mother had borne so patiently and long. But when I brought the matter up in one of our business meetings, the brethren thought it too great an undertaking for our weak congregation. I was present, Mr. Chairman, the day Bro. Drew made his appeal for the establishment of your ‘Charity Fund,’ and when I saw the readiness with which your people responded to that appeal, raising within ten minutes the munificent sum of more than \$900, I thought how true that old saying, ‘In union there is strength.’ I was at the station the day that young lady took the train for the county-seat, and witnessed the parting of mother and child. I shall never forget the scene. There were tears in the eyes of the mother as she bade her daughter good-by, but, in spite of

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those tears, the face wore an expression of inexpressible joy. As I think of that scene, I am reminded of a statement made by one of our sisters at the Sunday night meeting to which I have referred. We were discussing the religious situation of our town. To be more explicit, I will say we were discussing the question of joining this union movement. Some of the practices, such as foot-washing, trine immersion, etc., had been discussed at length, when Sister Bowman arose and said:

“ ‘Brethren and sisters, some new thoughts have come into my mind of late, and I must tell you of them. I know Paul told those Corinthian women to keep silent in the churches, but he also commended certain others for helping him in the Lord’s work; and, as I am not going to try to preach you a sermon, but only to help the work along. I feel that Paul, at least, will excuse me for telling you that, of late, I have come to believe that there is more genuine religion in extending a helping hand to some unfortunate brother or sister who, by misfortune, has been made helpless, than there is in the observance of some mere formality, which we are not certain Christ ever intended we should observe!

“ ‘It has fallen to my lot upon several occasions to wash the feet of Sister Gibson; but I have come to believe that John Drew washed her feet in a manner more acceptable to Christ than I had ever done when he made that appeal to the church which resulted in sending her daughter off to get the training necessary to lift the veil of poverty from their home.

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“ ‘It has been shown, brethren, that there is some room to doubt that Christ ever intended the church of to-day to practice foot-washing as one of its ordinances. The fact that the New Testament furnishes us no example of the apostles ever practicing it as such justifies such a doubt, but there is no room to doubt that He intended the church of to-day to help the widows and orphans in their afflictions; and if, by remaining a separate organization, in order to perpetuate the doubtful practice of foot-washing, we are rendering ourselves incapable of extending the necessary aid to those who are in distress, it is high time we were abandoning our separate organization and casting our mites into a common treasury with other of the Lord’s people, that we might, at least, have some fellowship in such a work.’

“To this statement of Sister Bowman, I will say, Mr. Chairman, we all agreed, and, by common consent, we are here to-day to join with you in this work, and—”

The above sentence was never finished, for as soon as the announcement of their capitulation was made, the people took the floor, and seemingly, for several minutes, the building rang with applause after applause. When, at last, the chairman had succeeded in restoring order, he said:

“Brethren, we have succeeded in our undertaking even beyond our expectations, and I feel we can now enter heartily into a real Thanksgiving service. I suggest, therefore, that we now have a season of prayer, during which all who so desire may express

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unto God the gratitude of their hearts for the success that has crowned our efforts, for the great blessings already received and for the even greater ones yet in store for us, as hand in hand we go forth to labor for our common Lord.”

When the season of prayer was ended, an invitation was extended to all who desired to speak a word. To this invitation quite a number responded, among them the several ministers. All expressed themselves as delighted with the new fellowship and larger service into which they had entered as the result of their union.

“Contrasting present conditions with the past,” said one of the speakers, “is enough to convince any unprejudiced mind that the step we have taken is a wise one. A few months ago five preachers were laboring here in this town, for as many separate organizations, neither of which was capable of meeting the needs of the people, neither from the standpoint of Bible instruction nor from the standpoint of rendering pecuniary aid to those in need. Proper equipment is just as necessary for our Bible schools, in order that they may do efficient work, as for our public schools. Who would think of discarding our present public-school building, with its various departments and equipment, for the antiquated building of years ago, consisting of a single room, into which were gathered children of all ages? And yet this latter represents the method which, until recently, we have employed in our Bible-school work. Into a single room we had gathered all we could induce to come,

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from the gray-haired grandfather and grandmother down to the tiny tot unable to read, while a corps of teachers, without even a blackboard to help them, were trying to lead them to a knowledge of the truth. But henceforth, friends, we shall apply the same common-sense and advanced methods to the conduct of our Bible school that, for years, we have applied to our public school.

“But not only was the divided church a failure from the standpoint of Bible instruction, but, as already stated, it was also a failure from the standpoint of rendering pecuniary aid to those in need. Only last winter I was made to blush with shame when it was told me that one of our widowed sisters was forced to appeal to the town board for financial aid. Brethren, such as that ought not to occur, and I am persuaded will not occur again in this town. For, if I mistake not, it is the purpose of this church to see that none of its members suffers for the necessities of life. I know there is some danger of the church being imposed upon in its ministrations of charity by those who are merely seeking the ‘loaves and fishes,’ but I was present, brethren, the night our board of deacons discussed this subject, prior to making their appeal for the establishment of a charity fund, and I know it is the purpose of the deacons to use all necessary precaution in the distribution of those funds. As one of them remarked last night, ‘We shall simply put into practice the statement made by Paul, when he said, “If any will not work, neither shall he eat.”’ As I understand it, brethren, this fund is to help the

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worthy poor, and not the unworthy. Just as our National Government stands pledged for the support of her disabled and honorably discharged soldiers, but disclaims any special obligations to the traitor or deserter, so this church stands pledged for the support of every disabled loyal member, but disclaims any special obligation to those whose daily walk and conversation shall prove them to be unworthy of such aid."

"Compared with the many who enlisted for service during our late Civil War, the number of traitors and deserters was very small indeed," said the chairman, "and we confidently hope that, in this great brotherhood of ours, the number of such will be proportionately smaller. Yea, we trust that every one who has enlisted in this great warfare between right and wrong will 'acquit themselves like men.' But, whether all remain loyal or not, one thing is certain, brethren: we can never get away from the obligation we are under to care for our comrades who fall wounded while in discharge of their duty. This is a work that has been greatly neglected, and, as a result, the church has failed to command the respect from men it would otherwise have commanded. But we are determined, friends, that this church shall not neglect her poor, nor any other work which the Lord has appointed for His church to do. And now, as this is the first service in our new building, I presume we may consider it the dedicatory service. However, one of the common features of such services will, in this case, be dispensed with—viz., that of raising money to meet the indebt-

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edness—for I am happy to announce that all our bills are paid in full, and a balance yet remains in the treasury. Still, as this is Thanksgiving Day, and a very appropriate season for such a work, I would suggest that we take a freewill offering, and that the proceeds be added to our charity fund.”

Judge Lampton: “I heartily approve of your suggestion, Bro. Lane, and beg permission to offer a few remarks before the offering is taken.”

“We will gladly hear you, Bro. Lampton.”

“I want to say, Mr. Chairman, that ever since I first read in the New Testament the history of the church established by Christ and His apostles, I have been an ardent admirer of that institution. But, as you know, it was not until four months ago that I united with the church. My reason for not doing so before was that I had little faith in a divided church. I never was able to harmonize denominationalism with the teaching of the New Testament, nor to see even any common sense in people claiming to be Christians dividing themselves up into rival groups and wasting their time, energy and means in fratricidal strife, while the work which God intended His church to do is compelled to go undone. But when I saw the members of four of the churches of this town breaking the fetters of denominationalism and uniting their forces, I felt it was a move in the right direction, and that I no longer had excuse for standing aloof, but owed to them whatever assistance I was capable of rendering to make the union a success. And I want to say, brethren, that four months’ fellowship with you in this

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work has only strengthened my faith in the movement; and, now that the members of the Brethren Church have united with us, I feel that we are in a position to demonstrate to the world what a blessing the church of Christ may become to the people of a town or community when conducted according to the New Testament pattern. In the early church there was a common treasury, into which loyal hearts poured their treasures of worldly wealth, and from which streams of charity flowed out toward every one in need, until it could be said of them, 'There was not one among them who lacked.' Brethren, that is just as it ought to be. God never intended that His children should have to appeal to the town board or to some fraternal organization for aid in time of need, but to the church itself. And my appeal upon this, our dedicatory and Thanksgiving Day, is that the fund already established be increased until all necessary aid can be extended from time to time to all who are in need."

Had Judge Lampton been less modest he would, perhaps, have announced to the audience before taking his seat the purpose that was in his heart. Sufficient to say, however, that, when the offering was taken, Judge Lampton's check for \$5,000 was found in one of the baskets. Other checks, ranging in amount from \$500 to \$1,000, were also found. These, together with the smaller donations and the amount already in hand, footed up the grand total of more than \$15,000. When the result of the offering was announced to the audience, the building again rang with applause. When silence was finally restored, the chairman announced:

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“Now, brethren, this has been a blessed day for us all, and, like Peter upon the mountain-top, we are loath to leave; but it is now past the noon hour, and we shall have to adjourn.

“To-morrow evening the Bible-school teachers will meet in the library building, for the purpose of better equipping themselves for teaching the Sunday morning lesson. At 9:30 Sunday morning we will have our first Bible-school service in this building, and to that service all are invited, whether they be young or old. At eleven o'clock Sunday morning and at eight in the evening there will be preaching by one of our pastors; just which one it will be I am unable to say; the preachers will arrange that among themselves. By the way, I am told that our preachers have experienced a little trouble at times deciding which should preach for the home church. The work has become so interesting at the several mission points that they esteem it a cross not to get to go. However, one of them will be with us on Sunday, and the others will go to meet other appointments. And now that we have another preacher added to our force, we shall have to open up another mission station. I have learned to-day that the new congregation over in the east section of the county will begin building in the very near future, and I predict it will not be long before the others will be building them a home. And let me say, brethren, that the eyes of all these missions are upon us. Our preachers have told them of the powerlessness of denominationalism to meet the needs of our people and of the blessings that have come to us in consequence

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of our union, and they have become fully convinced that if denominationalism will not work in town, it will not work in the country, and in that conclusion they are right. A little figuring ought to convince any one that denominationalism will not work in the country. Take, for instance, a rural district eight miles square, comprising sixty-four square miles of territory. This section, if cut up into farms of 160 acres, would furnish homes for 256 families, or, counting five persons to the family, 1,280 persons. Of these, one-fourth, or 380, are too young for church membership. From the remaining 960 we shall have to deduct one-half, for it is a lamentable fact that denominational Christianity has never succeeded in enlisting more than one-half of the American people; this leaves 480 persons in that community available for church membership. Now, who will say that those 480 persons, by combining their strength, energy and means, couldn't build a church-house in that district that would be a credit to the community, and that would meet all the needs of the people of that district for a place of worship and Bible study? They could and would do it. Indeed, they could have a settled pastor dwelling among them and preaching for them every Lord's Day; and the influence of such a church upon the non-Christian element of that community would be to convince them that there was a reality in the Christian religion, and the result would be a great reduction in the percentage of non-Christians in that community. While, upon the other hand, to divide those 480 persons up into six or eight different parties would render

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them powerless to do anything worthy the name of Christian work. The people in our several mission fields fully realize this fact, and the prevailing idea among them is to build a single church-house in each community, and let that be their religious home, while the Bible alone shall be their guide in all matters of Christian conduct.

“So I feel, brethren, we have much to be proud of in the work our missionaries are doing in their several fields. But while we have accomplished much, yet much remains to be accomplished. Not until the facts of the gospel have been proclaimed to the teeming millions of earth, and believers are taught to obey the Lord in all of His appointments, will our work as a church be done. Until then let us serve the Lord faithfully in whatever sphere we are placed, and I am sure God will richly reward us.”

The benediction was pronounced by Bro. Powell.

Thus ended what was conceded by all to be the greatest religious service ever held in the little town of Alpha, and here we might write the word “Finis,” but I can not refrain from noting another incident which grew out of this union of churches.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHURCH AT WORK

JUST a week before Christmas, Messrs. Drew, Potter and others were engaged in hauling some household goods from the depot and depositing them in a neat little cottage, surrounded by a few acres of rich and fertile land, while several of the women were unpacking and placing in order the different articles. The furniture was somewhat old, and the many scars upon it were evidence of it having been moved about from place to place many times. And indeed it had been, for it was the property of an old Presbyterian preacher, one whose whole life had been spent in an earnest effort to persuade men and women to live right in the sight of God. It was through his efforts that the Presbyterian Church in Alpha had been organized, and for twelve years he had served it in an acceptable manner. Though many of the people of the town disagreed with him in some of his interpretations of the Scriptures, yet all honored him for his integrity and good Christian character. Old age, however, had overtaken him at last, and had robbed him of his physical strength to that extent he was no longer able to preach regularly. For the past two years he and his enfeebled wife had made their home with their widowed daughter

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and her son, a boy of ten years, in the county-seat. Willingly the daughter had shared her meager income with her aged parents; but a week before the household goods above mentioned were shipped to Alpha, she had sickened and died, thus depriving the old folks and her son of their principal means of support.

When the brethren at Alpha heard of the daughter's death, they at once sent Mr. Drew to the county-seat to investigate the case. He found several of the neighbors in consultation with the old preacher and his wife, and, without revealing to them his mission, he sat and listened to their conversation.

"We think, Bro. Cooper," said one of them, "that the proper thing to do, under the circumstances, would be to let us find a home for the boy, and you and Sister Cooper go to the 'Old Folks' Home.' It will only require a hundred dollars each to get you admitted, and then you would have a comfortable home the remainder of your days. By selling off your furniture and that of your daughter, you would, perhaps, have enough to admit you both. However, should any be lacking, we will see that it is raised."

Not since John Drew used to argue with his neighbors at home about the foolishness and littleness of denominationalism had he experienced such a feeling of disgust as upon that occasion. Rising from his chair, he stepped directly in front of the old preacher, and said:

"I don't know, Bro. Cooper, just how you regard the proposition which has just been made you, but, to my mind, it lacks fairness, to say the least of it. It

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isn't fair, ladies and gentlemen, for a man to live among and serve the people of a given community as long as our brother here has served the people of this part of the State, and then, in the decrepitude of old age, send him off to some remote part of the State to end his days among strangers. However well he might be cared for there, he would miss, it seems to me, what to him would be the greatest pleasure of his life; viz., the daily intercourse with his friends."

"You are right, Bro. Drew," replied the old preacher, as he wiped the tears from his face; "that is the main reason why I dislike so much to go."

"Then you won't go, Bro. Cooper, for I am here as a representative of the church of Christ at Alpha to offer you a home in that town, where every person you meet will be your friend, by virtue of your long pastorate there. You won't find any Presbyterians there, but you will find as loyal a band of Christians as have graced the earth since the days of the apostles, and I am quite sure you will feel at home among them. Our plan is to locate you on a little suburban ranch, where you can amuse yourself raising garden truck, chickens, pigs, etc., and thus lead a sort of independent life."

When Mr. Drew had finished, the old preacher arose, and, placing both arms about his neck, exclaimed:

"Bro. Drew, I have always felt that the spirit of Christ dwelt in the heart of many of the people of Alpha. My pastorate there was one of the most pleasant in all my long ministry, and with a grateful

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heart I accept their generous offer, and will go as soon as I can dispose of a few things we do not care to take with us."

Mr. Drew arranged with one of the neighbors to assist in packing and shipping the goods, and then returned home.

The goods arrived in the forenoon a few days later, and when the preacher, wife and grandson arrived late in the afternoon of the same day, they found the house all set in order, as far as it was possible for the women to do so. In addition, a bountiful supper had been prepared, and soon the aged minister, his wife and the several preachers of the town, together with a number of the brethren and sisters, were all seated at the table, enjoying the repast which loving hands had prepared in honor of two of Christ's servants, whom age had robbed of their powers of usefulness.

When the meal was finished and the guests had enjoyed an hour or more of social intercourse, and were preparing to go, the old preacher said:

"Bro. Drew, I believe I never asked, nor have you told me, what rental I am expected to pay for these premises, and to whom it is to be paid."

"Why, my dear brother," said Mr. Drew, "the rental for these premises was paid in full by you years ago, when you were here ministering to these people in spiritual things. Doesn't Christ say, 'The laborer is worthy of his hire'? and doesn't Paul say, in substance, that 'we are under obligations to look after the temporal needs of those who minister to us in spiritual things'?"

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"Yes, Bro. Drew, you have rightly quoted both Christ and Paul. But these people did look after my temporal wants while I was here ministering to them; but my days of usefulness are about over, and I fear I shall not be able to render value for value."

"That may be true, my brother, so far as the future is concerned. But let me say that, since the scales of denominationalism have fallen from the eyes of our people, they have conceived the idea that the man who spends his life in the interest of the cause of Christ is just as worthy of honor and a competency in his declining days as the one who spends his life in the interest of the State or nation, and, so far as the people of this town and community are concerned, we are determined they shall have it. To this end a great brotherhood has been formed out of the once rival sects, and it is this brotherhood that has invited you here, and bids you lean upon its strong arm in these, the declining days of your life."

After the guests had all gone, and while they were sitting by the fire, the grandson having retired, the aged minister turned to his companion, and said:

"Well, wife, it seems that the Lord, whom we have tried to serve all these years, is still with us, and intends to be with us to the end. With a reasonable degree of health and strength, and with our grandson to help us, I think we shall be able to make a comfortable living here."

"Yes, dear," responded his wife. "Perhaps, after all, we shall be permitted to witness a golden sunset at the end of life's troublous day."

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They were quite happy in their new home, and entered upon their duties with a zest akin to that of newly married people. It was a great pleasure to them to have their old-time friends call to see them, and many were the happy hours spent in talking over past events. They were also regular in attendance at the church services, and apparently enjoyed them very much. But, notwithstanding the fact that scarcely a Sunday passed without one or more persons uniting with the church, yet they allowed several months to pass before formally connecting themselves with the congregation. This delay on the part of the aged minister and his wife to formally connect themselves with the church was the cause of considerable speculation on the part of some of the members. At the close of one of the morning services, during which several persons had made the confession, a group of persons were standing in the vestibule, when old Sister Noel approached them, and asked:

“Do any of you know why Bro. and Sister Cooper have not united with our church?”

After two or three had admitted their inability to enlighten her on the subject, Mr. Fillmore suggested that possibly it was the question of baptism that was holding them back.

“You see,” said he, “Bro. and Sister Cooper have never been immersed, and, as this church practices only immersion, perhaps they feel they would not be eligible to membership.”

“I have thought of that,” replied Mr. Groves, “and wondered whether we should not make some excep-

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tions to our rules in the matter of admitting persons to our fellowship. It seems to me that, if Bro. and Sister Cooper are satisfied with their baptism, we ought to be willing to receive them."

"To do so, Bro. Groves, would only be to court division. We are united now, and let us remain so," Mr. Middleton replied.

"I think I shall investigate the matter, anyway, and see if that is the cause of their standing aloof."

The following evening Mr. Groves went to see the aged couple in their home, and had quite a lengthy conversation with them. What was said need not now be related. Sufficient to say that, in response to the invitation the following Lord's Day, the aged couple walked to the front and asked to be received into the fellowship of the church. Bro. Logan, the former Presbyterian minister, preached the sermon that morning, and, after announcing to the audience that Bro. and Sister Cooper had come to the front to formally unite with the church, said: "I much prefer that Bro. Cooper state his case to the congregation himself." Whereupon he arose and said:

"Brethren and sisters, my wife and I have been trying to serve the Lord for more than sixty years. During the greater part of that time I have been trying in an humble way to preach the gospel myself. But, as you know, old age has incapacitated me for such service, and, together with my wife, we are simply waiting for the summons to cross the mystic river and render account unto our Lord. A few months ago our

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widowed daughter, with whom we had been making our home, died, and we were left without any visible means of support. We were indeed in the midst of our Gethsemane when Bro. Drew, a representative of this congregation, came to us and offered us a home in this village. For several months now we have been enjoying our home, and also the weekly services held in this magnificent temple which you have erected and dedicated to the service of the God whom we all love and adore. I must say, however, that our delight in the services has been hindered somewhat by the thought that we were not members of the congregation. Knowing the position you had taken on the subject of baptism, we have felt a delicacy in asking to be received into your fellowship, as neither of us has ever been immersed. However, during the past week, in conversation with one of your members, it was suggested to me that possibly the congregation might be willing to make an exception to their rule in a case like ours. But, so far as we are concerned, the suggestion came too late, for during the past few months we have been studying the baptismal question in its relationship to the subject of Christian union as never before, with the result that we are both fully convinced that the position you have taken upon that subject is right, and that it is the only solution of the problem of Christian union.

“That immersion was the practice of the early church is clearly proven by history, both secular and divine. The Greek Church has always practiced it. The Roman Church admits it was the practice of the

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early church, and claims the honor (?) of changing the form from immersion to sprinkling. Luther, Calvin and Wesley all admitted that immersion was the practice of the apostles. Paul declares there is 'one baptism,' and the same apostle declares 'we are buried with Christ by baptism'; and, with these facts staring them in the face, there are thousands of people in the world—yea, millions of them—whose consciences will not permit them to practice nor sanction any other form of baptism than that of immersion; and it is folly for us to expect such persons to dwell together in unity with those who practice sprinkling or pouring. While, upon the other hand, there are very few, if any, even among those who practice sprinkling or pouring, but are willing to admit the validity of immersion. As for myself, I have never hesitated to receive into the fellowship of the church persons who had been immersed.

"So it seems to me, brethren, in view of the utter impossibility of ever getting all Christians to recognize the validity of sprinkling or pouring, that it is our duty who practice these forms to discontinue them, since, in doing so, we are removing one of the greatest barriers that stand in the way of the union of God's people, and, at the same time, doing it without any sacrifice of conscience; for we all admit that a penitent believer in Christ, buried with his Lord in a watery grave, and raised in the likeness of His resurrection from the tomb, has been baptized. So, instead of asking for an exception to your rule in the matter of receiving us into your fellowship, both my wife and I

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have come to conform to your custom in the matter of our baptism."

When the aged minister had resumed his seat, Bro. Logan arose and said:

"Brethren, this is one of the happiest days of my life. I am happy because of the triumph of God's truth. Here is a man who, for more than half a century, has been preaching the gospel of the Son of God; yet, having discovered a new truth, he is determined to follow its lead. In doing so, he is administering a withering rebuke to those who, having started a certain way, think they must continue in that way, whether it be the way that truth directs or no. It is also a rebuke to those who have conceived the idea that the ordinances of the Lord's house may be changed with impunity or entirely ignored, if necessary, in order to suit the convenience of men. I am fully convinced, brethren, that we preachers have wasted a great deal of precious time trying to make the way of life easy for the people to travel. What truly penitent men and women want is a clear knowledge of the will of God concerning them, and, when they know His will, they are ready and willing to do it, even though, as in the case of these two, it requires a goodly degree of moral courage to make them equal to the task."

A nod in the direction of the chorister was the signal for a song, and soon the whole audience was engaged in singing that old hymn beginning "My faith looks up to Thee."

When the song had ended, Bro. Logan, the aged minister and his wife were all standing at the head

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of the baptistery. Turning to the audience, Bro. Logan said:

“Brethren, with no disrespect to my Lord and Master, and with no thought of comparing this with the scene of His baptism, yet the words of John the immerser, ‘I have need to be baptized of thee,’ very fitly describe my feeling as I stand here beside this aged veteran of the cross. Yet, believing that the same motive which led Christ to the Jordan has led him here, and that it would be just as useless for me to object as it was for John of old, I shall concede to his request and that of his wife, and administer to them this sacred ordinance, in what I sincerely believe to be the Lord’s appointed way.”

A spirit of solemnity pervaded the audience as the aged couple, each in turn, suffered themselves to be lowered in the watery grave. But when the last had emerged, and the chorus began to sing,

“O land of rest, for thee I sigh.
When will the moment come
When I shall lay my armor by,
And dwell with Christ at home,”

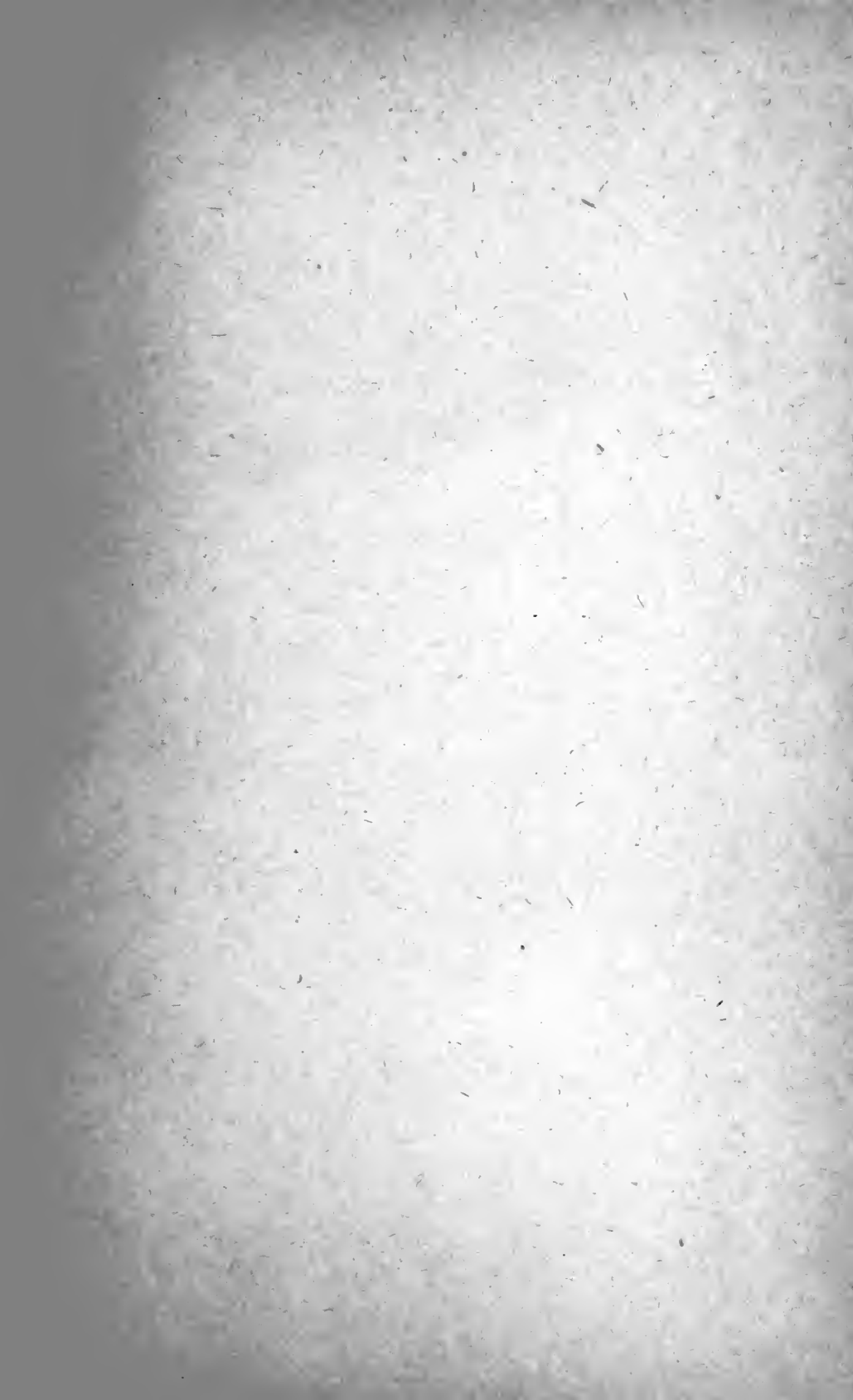
the congregation awoke as from a dream and joined in the chorus,

“We’ll work till Jesus comes,”

with an earnestness and zeal that betokened a definite purpose on the part of the Alpha congregation, now numbering nearly seven hundred souls, to keep the altar fires burning and their armor bright with Christian service until the Lord should call them home.

THE END.

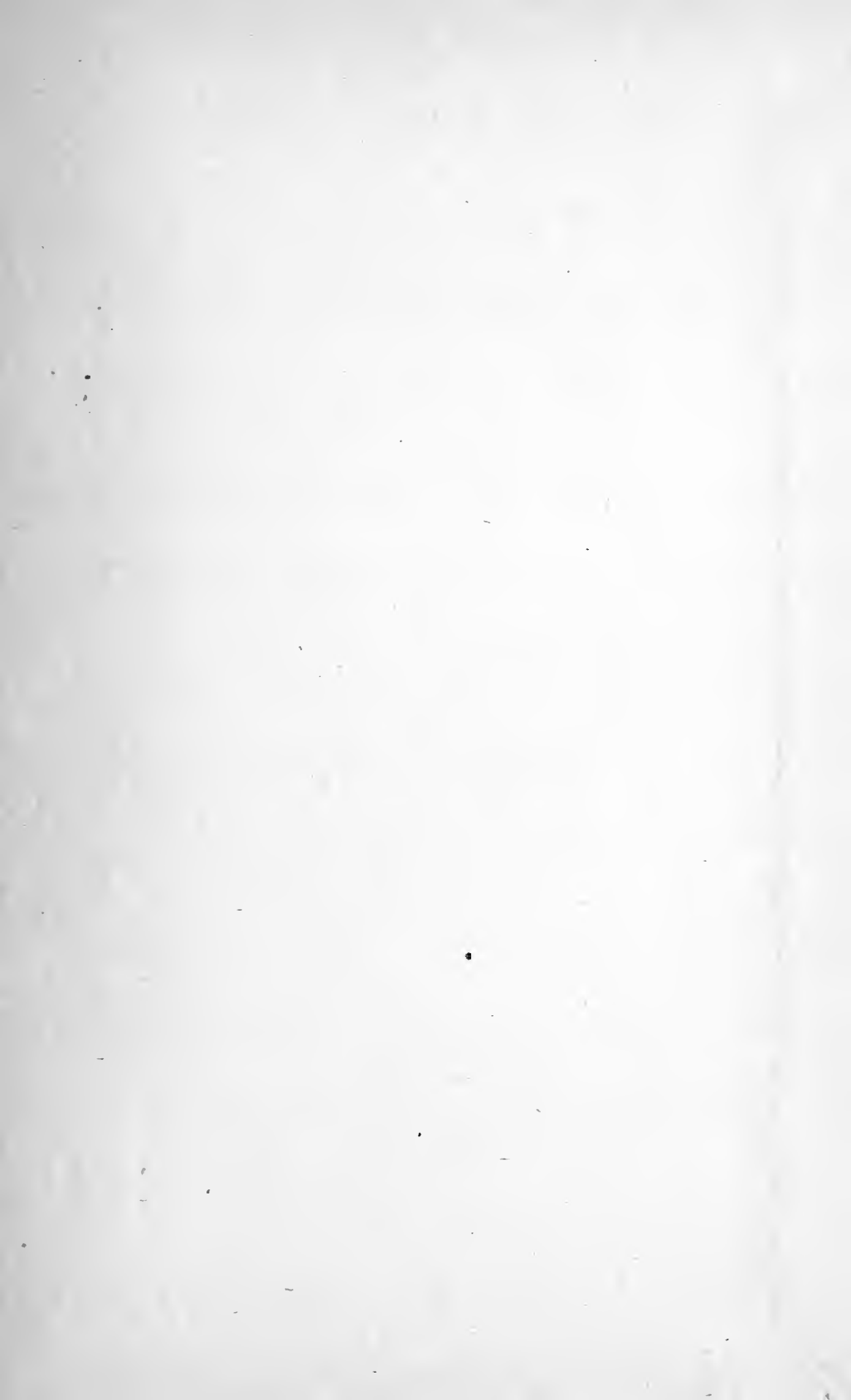




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